ALIENATION IN THE NOVELS OF SARGESON AND DAVIN

A study of four novels: *I Saw in My Dream*; *I for One...*; *Cliffs of Fall*; *Roads from Home*.

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I. UNDERDOG AND OVERMAN: THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This thesis argues that, in four novels, Sargeson and Davin are writing variations on a similar theme, which we may call simply, "alienation".

At the risk of becoming tedious, these variations must be defined. We will make an arbitrary distinction between two types of isolation. One is brought about through feelings, or emotion. The other is reached through thought, or intellect. It is suggested that, while Sargeson writes about a solitude which is attained through the senses, Davin concerns himself with a solitude which is attained through the intellect. Sargeson's sympathies are with the underdog: in this case someone who has the worst of an encounter, and is therefore compelled by his emotions to become an outcast. Davin's sympathies, on the other hand, are with the overman: in this case someone who thinks himself superior to moral restrictions, and chooses to keep his distance from conventional codes of behaviour. For convenience, we will usually refer to both types of solitary by

a neutral word, "outsider": meaning a non-member of some group.

The novels, which have been chosen because they seem representative of their authors' early work, are: I Saw in My Dream and I for One ... by Frank Sargeson; and Cliffs of Fall and Roads from Home by Dan Davin.

Close attention will be paid to the narrative techniques each author employs, for there appears to be an important correspondence between that which each is intent upon saying, and the manner in which it is said.

II. MEN ALONE: THE CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE.

New Zealand has till now been remarkably free from the type of longwinded, or scholarly, literary criticism which may be found in this thesis. Probably the best explanation for such a salutary state of affairs is that the national literature has taken, and may still take, a long time to mature.

Many critical reviews seem to have been written in a crusading spirit by people who have been actively engaged in creative work themselves. Novelists and poets have frequently been told what, and how, they ought to be writing. There has been a sense of common participation in the development of a literature which has about it some distinctively New Zealand quality.[1] Consequently, no appreciable gap has widened between an established critical clique on the one hand, and a group of new writers

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[1] cf. R.A. Copland, Landfall 51, p.279, echoed by E.H. McCormick, Landfall 53, p.61.

on the other, although recently there have seemed signs of this among the poets.

As yet, it appears impossible to define precisely what we mean by New Zealand literature. At first glance, Allen Curnow seems to have succeeded: "... work of some value, or some promise of permanence, written by one of ourselves, and in which we recognize (however obliquely) something of ourselves."[1] But then we ask, who are "ourselves"? What other common bond links us as a people beyond the geographical accident of place and the machinery of government? Even this, the fact that we all live in a welfare state, has acted as an irritant upon our authors. Social protest, staple diet for writers, has had to take the form of attacks upon the national euphoria, or to draw attention to the plight of minority groups, such as the Maori.

Our artists have tended to concentrate on what they feel are personal and national predicaments. We could say that they are in search of a vital tradition. Whatever the case, a common concern is that of rootlessness. The poets have sought to

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[1] New Zealand Literature. The case for a working definition", The Future of New Zealand, ed. M.F. Lloyd Prichard (Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd., 1964) p.87.

establish a proper national identity. They have satirized conventional stereotypes, which they feel are spurious. The novelists also reject what is commonly accepted by the community, particularly puritanism and a stifling conformity. They prefer to explore the plight of a character who will not be confined by national, provincial, or family restrictions.

Recent writing in this country, therefore, is largely a literature of protest, expressing itself in the figure of the misfit, the nonconformist, or the unusual person. Among the poets, we have Glover's Arawata Bill; among the short story writers, John A. Lee's Shiner. This concern for the outcast accounts for a host of juvenile heroes in our fiction, probably because the issues can be seen most clearly when an inexperienced, unsophisticated child is either dragged or enticed into a seductive, but ultimately unprepossessing, adult world. To name only three, we recall Lee's Albany Porcello, Courage's Walter Blakiston, and Cross's Jimmy Sullivan. At a more sophisticated age, Sylvia Ashton-Warner's spinster is, unfortunately, no more a typical New Zealand schoolmistress than is Germaine

de Beauvais a typical provincial music teacher. Pearson's Coal Flat and Gee's The Big Season epitomize one recent trend, with a sensitive misfit pitted against an uncomprehending social group, everything being recounted in starkly realistic terms. Janet Frame approaches the same theme from a different angle. She sees the problem as being one of communication. But the poetic intensity which sustains her conception of reality blurs all distinctions between normality and abnormality. We have had de Mauny's Peter Villiers, and John Mulgan's Johnson. In fact, the idea of Man Alone could well sum up much, if not most, recent local literature.

This predilection for using the outsider as a whip with which to thrash society is not a phenomenon peculiar to New Zealand, of course, but in these examples there is a degree of sameness about the background which each misfit finds it necessary to reject. Accordingly, sociological criticism is frequently of considerable value. Our concern, however, is not with the background, but with the individual who detaches himself from it. Sargeson and Davin are both concerned with the plight of the outsider, and although each sets his characters

in a different milieu, their books revolve around this identical theme.

Their achievement is to make explicit the problems which may confront any individual in any society. But they do not attempt to solve them, and we can expect to find in their pages no easy way out from that human predicament of which the outsider is a symbol. Whatever values they choose to assert through their portrayals of this type of character can hardly be those claustrophobic New Zealand ones against which he has himself rebelled.

One danger must be guarded against. We must beware of what Arnold, writing about poetry, has called the "historical fallacy".[1] All the novels with which we are concerned are good, in differing ways. But it would be dangerous to claim for them greatness. They are of academic interest in any study of New Zealand fiction. They form part of a developing literary tradition. Perhaps their real worth, however, stems from the fact that in an age of disintegration, moral and social, they concentrate our attention not upon the weakened social fabric of civilization, but upon the worth of the individual

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[1] The Study of Poetry, 1880.

fragments into which it has fallen, with whom any attempt at reconstruction must ultimately begin.

III. FRANK SARGESON

It is difficult to choose a point at which to begin swelling what Sargeson calls: "the daily blah blah chorus of the teeming middlemen who inhabit every place from the shop to the university college..."[1] We should beware of applying to all his work the conclusions we reach. That is the first thing to recognize. Sargeson has possibly been taken much too seriously by everyone in this country, and it is conceivable that future criticism will call attention to this, as to a distinction between the earlier Sargeson, cast in the "role of self-liberator (and perhaps liberator of some of those who suffer under little Bethel)"[2], and the later Sargeson: witty, urbane, and not above a literary spoof or two.[3] Looming largest is the idea, as David Hall puts it: "that it is time we embalmed Sargeson and laid him in his monument against the great awakening."[4]

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[1] Landfall 15, p.265.

[2] Landfall 16, p.358. (Writing about Lawrence.)

[3] cf. City and Suburban, Landfall 73.

[4] Landfall 39, p.257.

Perhaps two matters most require attention: his relationship to local literary tradition, and his intentions in writing. Sargeson himself conveniently describes how his pre-occupation with language as medium for the artist, and his aversion to imported formalities, led him to evolve "an appropriate language to deal with the material of New Zealand life."[1] We may take it that this did not come to him naturally;[2] that he was concerned as much with the sound of words as with their meaningful "visual" associations; that his style was originally not directly derivative from the Americans[3]. His achievement was to "make his own tradition."[4]

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[1] "Beginnings," Landfall 74, p.127.

[2] p.125, ibid., where he describes his annoyance at finding a "literary" language most congenial.

[3] cf. p.128, ibid.

[4] Walter Allen, The Puritan and the Waif, ed. Helen Shaw (Auckland: H.L. Hofmann, 1954), p.19. (Hereafter this book will be abbreviated to P & W.) cf. John Reece Cole: "Sargeson cut off literary dead wood (much of which is still preserved in our schools and universities), evolving a manner of writing that was clear and actual. ... He gave the first confident indication of an indigenous literature." Landfall 6, p.149.

This meant more than simply capturing typical local idioms.[1] Indeed, James K. Baxter claims that "Its value lies far less in an accurate reproduction of common speech than in the creation of a new art form."[2] But Sargeson has written: "Between D'Arcy Cresswell and myself, there was all the difference between the transcendent splendour of poetry, and the drab fidelity of prose."[3] The question is: drab fidelity to whom?

A number of critics (writing, admittedly, while Sargeson's published work was small), have tended to interpret his stories as reflections of conventional New Zealand society, disguised as fiction. Thus J.C. Reid: "... the extent to which Frank Sargeson's work is objective is a measure of his truth as an imaginative recorder of aspects of our national character."[4] At the

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[1] cf: Davin, P & W, pp. 56-57, and on punctuation, p.61.

[2] ibid., p.11. [3] Landfall 56, p.351.

[4] J.C. Reid, Creative Writing in New Zealand. A brief critical history (Wellington: Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd., 1946), p.64. cf. Lawrence Baigent on New Zealand writers and society: "... the behaviour patterns are as stereotyped and banal as the prose in which they are described." Landfall 14, p.157. cf. R.M. Chapman, "Fiction and the Social Pattern," Landfall 25, pp.30 & 56, and Sargeson's own attacks

other extreme, H. Winston Rhodes:

> ... like any artist, he is concerned with a private vision that touches external reality only at a number of points ... [and which is] ..., related far more closely to what has been called the moral climate of the twentieth century than to typical New Zealand attitudes. ... Sargeson explores his limited portion of life with the mind of a moralist and the technique of an objective recorder.[1]

Professor Rhodes calls attention to the "pathos of isolation" in Sargeson's stories,[2] commenting that his work should be viewed in relation to "a slowly disintegrating Western society.",[3] and notes that :

> Neither traditional religious belief nor any coherent political philosophy gives meaning to the lives of his forgotten men and women, his voluntary or involuntary outcasts from society.[4]

Sargeson himself would appear to agree. After his encounter with what he calls a "social outcast" who either believed in "something which society did not believe in", or was "entirely

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on "little Bethel", Landfall 16, pp. 358-59. Chapman poses the question unequivocally, writing in Landfall 10, p.182: "... the problem which has in every sense diverted the reviewers of Frank Sargeson and Dan Davin - is it a true record, a fair picture, and do these things equal or can they comprehend art?"

[1] "The Moral Climate of Sargeson's Stories," P & W, p.40.

[2] ibid., p.32. [3] ibid., p.29. [4] ibid., p.33.

isolated," he formed a resolution. "He was right, and society was wrong - and I wanted to assure myself and him that I was on his side."[1] This is the central affirmation of Sargeson's work, and it inevitably involves his figures in a repudiation of the "wrongness" of society: which may be found as often in New Zealand as elsewhere.[2]

Bearing these considerations in mind, we may greet the central character of I Saw in My Dream, who is compelled to become one of those who, as Professor Rhodes has said: "live outside the domestic circle, outside the social group".[3]

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[1] "Beginnings," Landfall 74, p.123.

[2] "... Mr. Sargeson is writing from a particular time and place, ... he is writing of a local variant of the human situation." Bill Pearson, Introduction to Collected Stories (Auckland: Blackwood & Janet Paul, 1964), p.17.

[3] P & W, p.31. cf. p.57 (Davin), and p.17 (Allen).

IV. I SAW IN MY DREAM

I Saw in My Dream was published by John Lehmann, of London, in 1949. Part One had earlier appeared as a short novel, published by Caxton Press, Christchurch, in 1945, which was entitled - When the Wind Blows. This was, perhaps, unfortunate. Critics have complained of a lack of cohesion about the book. They point out that not only does the central figure use his second name in Parts Two and Three, becoming Dave Griffiths in place of the more formal Henry, but there is, they say, no unity between the first two parts.[1] Admittedly there is some truth in this, particularly if the work's value is thought to reside only in its portrayal of "a

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[1] "The connection between the two parts is slight; Henry and Dave bear little resemblance to each other, and the book lacks that unifying element - call it action, plot, drama, what you will - without which a novel cannot exist, if the term is to retain any meaning at all." Baigent, loc. cit., p.158. Joan Stevens considers: "... it is not a unified whole." The New Zealand Novel 1860-1960 (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1962), p.72. E.H. McCormick is more perceptive, though unsympathetic: "I Saw in My Dream lacks any unifying theme except the groping struggle of the hero, Henry-Dave, who is too negative a figure to excite interest, much less compassion." New Zealand Literature, A Survey (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.134.

whole era of history"[1], or its "attack on puritanism, sentimentality, mediocrity, fear of ideas, fear of commitment."[2] Yet this is to overlook Sargeson's achievement in delineating the dilemma of his outsider, as well as to confine our attention to the most obvious factual circumstances from which it is comprised.

Could it be that the book is too often read as an excursion by a very competent short story writer into unfamiliar and inhospitable territory, or with judgement already passed upon When the Wind Blows? Does one, therefore, resent having to reappraise that theme of Part One which is comfortably suggested by its title: a cradle of youthful innocence being tossed about by harsh winds of adult corruption? Is it not futile to expect everywhere the lapidary texture or precise cohesion of Sargeson's earlier short stories? After all, he has subsequently proved himself a versatile and adventuresome author. For instance, we have had his two extremely interesting plays published in 1964 as Wrestling with the Angel[3]. His most recent stories;

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[1] ibid., p.134. [2] Stevens, op. cit., p.71.

[3] (Christchurch: Caxton Press, 1964).

City and Suburban[1] and Beau[2], show a radical departure in technique and chosen persona from his earlier work. The familiar theme of the displaced or "maladjusted" central character is still there but their style can only be paralleled in his critical writings.

It is important to bear these questions in mind, when the authorial stance is under scrutiny, because this novel has, it seems, been very carefully written. As narrator, Sargeson is completely "inside" Henry-Dave. Throughout the book, in fact, Henry-Dave is a type of camera. Each scene is carefully arranged, and every character is studiously posed, but Sargeson's role as photographer is simply to observe and to record. Henry-Dave is the eyes and the ears of the reader.

Hence the reader has a sense of living through the boy's experiences with him, and of coming to share with him that posture of the outsider which events cause him to adopt. Moreover, we find ourselves viewing other characters as they seem to

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[1] Landfall 73, pp. 4-9.

[2] Mate 13, pp. 18-24.

exist in the narrative flow for the central character, not through the eyes and ears of an omniscient author.

In this lies a singular achievement of the book. The reader is so placed that he can know neither more nor less about the other characters than he could in real life. The problem of communication preoccupies a writer like Janet Frame. But here is Sargeson, a realistic writer in the sense of re-creating everyday, realistic, human relationships, neither narrowing nor widening the gulf which separates individuals, yet patently aware of the problem in this novel. Henry-Dave, perhaps a modern Everyman,[1] grows towards self-

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[1] M.H. Holcroft thought that, in Part One, he was "a bundle of responses and attributes rather than a person, or perhaps more accurately a vessel for memory, not able to come to life in his own right because he was too often called upon to be every boy ..." Islands of Innocence (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1964), p.31. Helen Shaw, on the other hand, emphasizes the validity of this universality, recalling Edwin Muir's "fixed allegorical figures in a timeless landscape", and commenting that "the form of Sargeson's best stories" is "that of an inflated parable or sermon". "Sargeson and Mansfield in Contrast," P & W, p.54.

knowledge and a sense of apartness, from his knowledge of other people. It is a progression, but it is the progress of a faltering Pilgrim, of an Honest but not a Stand-Fast; a Feeble-Mind, not a Great-Heart.

In many ways, I Saw in My Dream resembles Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.[1] This is not to say that Sargeson's book is autobiographical, though it could be. But like Stephen Dedalus, Henry-Dave is earnest and sensitive, seeking a purposeful vocation and a unity of being which his family and acquaintances deny him. Like Stephen, he is more often aware of what he does not want than of what he does. Like Stephen, his experiences arrange themselves around moments of meaningful intensity, "epiphanies" in Joyce's sense. Like Stephen, Henry-Dave progresses from an infancy compounded of sense-impressions, totally dependent upon his mother, becoming aware of the horror and emptiness of life, and impelled towards his position in Part Three, where he feels his

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[1] "... I supposed in my ignorance that some admired book, such as James Joyce's Portrait of the Artist was an accurate copy of what had actually happened in the author's life." "Beginnings," Landfall 74, p.123.

vocation lies away from the hollow world he has seen. He must go, like Stephen, on a symbolic journey. The purpose of his posture is implicit:

"He wanted to do something too. In his own way. Something special -" (p.277), not explicit, as is Stephen's :

> "I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." [1]

Significantly, in contrast to the instinctive repulsion and rejections of the earlier parts, Henry-Dave's final stance is one of assertive affirmation:

YES (p.277)

in which he echoes another of Joyce's characters: Molly Bloom at the end of Ulysses.

It would, however, be futile to try to find where this positive statement of faith is expected to lead him. His tragic predicament lies in his fruitless search for something .[2] He expects in

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[1] A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Penguin ed., 1960), p.253.

[2] "Something is wrong, something is lacking, something has been lost - that is the theme underlying most of the serious writing produced in this country in the last twenty years." Baigent, loc. cit., p.157.

vain to find it in the world of Part One which he knows. Nor is it to be found in the world of Part Two which he apparently chooses as an alternative to the first. He knows in Part Three that the "something" which he must do cannot be accomplished in the two types of society which he has experienced. More, it is unique:

> "... I'd like to do something special. Perhaps it might be something nobody else can do except me." (p.276).

But exactly what it is that Henry-Dave will eventually do is peripheral to the central theme of this novel. We can at least be sure that he will not return to the ways of life he has experienced. His fate it is to be always searching, and Sargeson's achievement is to heighten the inevitability of this search. Henry-Dave is compelled to become less a social reject than a rejector of society. It would be facile to account him merely a passive "waif", as Erik Schwimmer has suggested.[1] He becomes an outsider to Sargeson's conventional society, not just convention; and

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[1] "A Picaresque View of Life," P & W, pp. 42-50.

he is constantly being forced to opt out of distasteful situations.

His final attitude seems inevitable if the reader imaginatively "lives through" Henry-Dave. Sargeson's task as author has been to present the world, or the two worlds, in which Henry-Dave has his being, in such a way that we share his attractions and repulsions, learn with him, and so come to share his final attitudes. In a sense, Henry-Dave stands still while his environment is trundled past.

Now this has its dangers. Sargeson has been praised for his descriptions of scenes and incidents, while he has been censured for a lack of coherence when he tries to weld these into a whole.[1] The style in which I Saw in My Dream is written has been described as lacking in tension,

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[1] "It seems that his talent lies principally in the lightning sketch, in the capturing of small facets of experience and characters. Sometimes in his later stories the reader becomes a little too conscious of the formula at work. He seems to lack the larger vision necessary for longer stories, and both That Summer and When the Wind Blows, despite their brevity, seem padded out." Reid (op. cit., p.63) was, of course, writing in 1946, before the publication of Parts Two and Three.

producing "a lax, enervating effect."[1] But this is a style peculiar to the persona, an attempt to produce the thought of Henry-Dave, emanating from his mind alone, as it does from Bill in That Summer. It can be endorsed, if not approved, as the speech pattern of the "characteristic" New Zealander. Sargeson deserves credit for having caught the national idioms and cadences, and for making them an integral part of his art forms, even if he has recently chosen to explore a literary medium which is not so obviously indigenous to this country. So we must remember that it is the consciousness of Henry-Dave which experiences the shifting panorama that makes up the two worlds of the novel. This is, indeed, "life seen through a temperament."[2]

What, therefore, does Henry-Dave experience, and how does it affect him? Part One begins with a question which is still being asked on the last page "Who loves you?" The answers to this catechism of affection are not, however, to sustain him for long. His faith in his father and his religious

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[1] Baigent, loc. cit., p.159.

[2] ibid.

ideals are jolted when he sees the self-righteous puritan "... sitting there nearly hidden behind a gooseberry bush, and he was sitting quite still, while from behind the gooseberry bush he looked over towards the house." (p.87). He is watching Auntie Clara getting dressed. Appropriately enough, "... Henry slid down into the bed again, and pulled the clothes up over his head." (p.87). He is returning to the security of infancy: "... the dark, warm in the hollow of the bed, snug as a bug in a rug. (p.11).

This dark hollow is to haunt Henry-Dave throughout the book. It is a sanctuary, but one which may be violated, as when he pushes Molly Grigg into its embodiment, the strongroom (p.59), or when it becomes a symbol of both refuge and restriction in the form of Cedric's cave. As Ron puts it:

> If there's a cave Cedric's gone to live in it. Lots of people wish they could go away and live in caves. Be adult-educated, and read modern psychology. (p.219).

And again on page 220:

> I mean the shape of a ball - or a cave. Think of yourself inside - snug as a bug in a rug. Just as if you'd never been born.

The strands are brought together in a revealing passage on pages 244-45.

By now, Dave knows that it is impossible for him to accept Johnny's advice, and "follow Christ's example" (p.244), except perhaps as one who must suffer from, rather than for, the all-too-obvious sins of the world, not least among which is a distaste for idealists. Cedric too, is unable to come to terms with society, becoming a sort of persecuted Pan, reminiscent of the "natural man" dear to the Romantics,[1] or Edmund in King Lear with his "Thou, Nature, art my goddess;"[2] or of someone like Stephen Wonham in The Longest Journey by E.M. Forster, a writer with whom Sargeson has much in common.[3] Yet it is the "Henry" part of Dave which is compared with the suffering Christ.

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[1] "The human being which Sargeson most often depicts is Natural Man, a creation of the modern romantics, a person for whom there are no transcendent values, ... merely a highly developed animal seeking happiness in the fulfilment of his natural impulses or finding unhappiness in their frustration." Reid, op. cit., p.63.

[2] I, ii, 1.

[3] Analogies can be taken too far, of course, and tediously. E.P. Dawson seeks to explain Sargeson by Forster, Joyce, Bunyan, and Twain. "I Believe ... ," P & W, pp. 20-28.

This is done quite unobtrusively, never at the expense of the natural ease of the colloquialisms, or obtruding the person of the author, when Mr. Anderson explains to him why "when anybody said Christ I'd always think little Henry." (p.148). This is a piece of apt and integral symbolism. The theme has been touched upon once before, when Uncles Bob and Ted come to visit the Griffiths (p.40).

Henry reads to them his Bible class paper, on the question

> Was it possible for a young man to be so filled with the spirit of the Master, that his life would resemble His in every possible way? (p.36).

When he has finished, the worldly cynicism of his uncle delicately adumbrates his later baffled frustration:

> ... I reckon he might find it a bit tough when he's a lawyer.
> And Henry said well, it might be a bit tough passing his exams.
> No, uncle Ted said, that's not what I mean. (p.41).

Then, after the excitement and gaiety of the tennis match, his parents return. Again Sargeson leaves events to speak for themselves. His father simply indicts himself, in his "hard-

knocker hat."[1] When the swagger comes to the door asking for food and shelter, Sargeson realistically observes and records the father's reaction, but with damning effect: "Well, his father listened to Henry, still kneeling and looking out of his hands that were over his face, and he said the man couldn't stay there." (p.34). Henry later identifies himself with this same rejected swagger, whose load is perhaps "life", during a dream. (pp.85-86).

Sargeson's intention is to place the reader in Henry-Dave's position, to describe what he sees, and then to move on. When, later in the book, Johnny asks Dave a question, his reply can be understood and sympathized with:

> "Did you ever go to any of those missions?
>
> My God, Dave said, no!" (p.109).

Then Mr. Anderson is talking to Dave as they are mustering:

> I got sent to Sunday school but it never had much effect, though I suppose it's all right if it teaches kids to behave themselves. But that's about all you can say for it.
>
> Well, Dave said, well - it opens up a big subject. (p.124).

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[1] cf. Conversation with my Uncle: "We don't want a world full of dead men walking about in hard knockers." Collected Stories, p.22.

The result of this is a sympathy and understanding for Henry-Dave which we may account to a sense of having lived through his experiences with him.

And these are usually depressing. The same inhibitions which harass his cousin Cherry (pp.26-30), find an outlet with him when he pushes the office girl into the strong-room to protect her from workers outside the window (pp.56-59). Mixed fear and fascination for sex overshadow his childhood recollections: the cow giving birth to a calf (p.16), the "dirty" rhymes and riddles (pp.18 and 21), and his attempt with Arnold to see Auntie Clara dressing in the bathroom (pp. 22-23). Again, there is no authorial obtrusion. Afterwards, when he sees his father doing the same thing, and the puritanical bubble is finally burst, he finds he can dismiss the world he has known as inadequate, and exults in his own body, baptizing himself to nature. He ripples the water with his feet to dispel an image of two parent crayfish:

> ... trying to circle each other, holding their claws raised up in front of them. (p.89).

He has lost sight of, but not exorcized this spectre. In Part Two he looks down from the

bridge:

> ... there were probably snags below the surface - but you could only guess what they might be. (p.113).

Dave finds neither security nor lasting well-being in the country. He wanders through an emotional wasteland. Marriage seems an empty farce. For all her outward roughness, Mrs. Macgregor is just as unbalanced as Cherry, or his Auntie Clara. Having fed her baby brother caustic soda, she now bisects bees with a pair of scissors for sport. She seems to scream and swear too loudly and too often in a book which secures its finest effects from understatement. But is this intentional?

> "Just one old woman, Dave was thinking. What ought she to look like anyway?" (p.158).

Perhaps this is the distilled essence of the bizarre Mrs. Macgregor. Nonetheless, it seems extravagantly polemical, if highly amusing, to make Mrs. Daley epitomize reaction in her assertions that "agitators" should be either locked up for life, or handed over "to the women of the country to deal with", who if they were like Mrs. Daley, would have for them "kennels built on all the farms",

together with an importation of "some of those pigamies [sic] from Africa." (p.181).

Nor are the debauched city sophisticates who come to the Andersons' for Christmas, and who belong presumably, to the life which Marge had extolled at the tennis club opening, judged by anything other than what they do and say. Against the liveliness and spontaneity of Rangi's party, their banality seems fundamentally sterile. When they go off to their dance in the motor car, (a creature of suburbia for which Sargeson has as little affection as Forster) the reader is not really startled to hear Mr. Anderson say:

> "... It would be quite a nice night for a murder, Dave, don't you reckon?" (p.224).

Crudely, but effectively, these human conflicts are later related to the natural world. (p.139). So Mr. Anderson tells Dave:

"A dog will stick to his boss when no bitch ever will - that's my experience." (p.206). In similar vein, there are the dogs watching from the "dark caves of their kennels" (p.153), while a rooster, "walking all on his own", drives off some hens. (p.154).

It is this natural world which has attracted Dave as an alternative to the emptiness of his childhood and adolescent life in town. At first, it is enticing: "A whole world empty and waiting ..." (p.98). During the mustering, Dave finds that he has stepped into this world, and although one never forgets that it is "scarred by the slips" (p.127), he is now inside looking out, so that the perspective has changed, and the scene seems "something that might have been only a model that you could hold on the palm of your hand." (ibid.) He does not, however, voice assent to Mr. Anderson's comment that "this country's our home." (p.126). As he moves deeper into the human wasteland of rural society, the countryside becomes more implacable. Then, after mention of Hardy in the Anderson's kitchen, and after civilization has reared its head in the mention of Jack's avidity for the contents of the Farmers' Catalogue, his dependence on the "Good Book", and Mrs. Anderson's craving for a car, Dave looks out the window to find that the land is almost menacing:

> He was conscious of an immense and chilly emptiness - as though the world were a barren and friendless place to live in. (p.146).

He has lost contact with the world which was to have become his home; thus a bank of earth echoes his footsteps "in some language that you could no longer understand." (p.196). The old affection seems later to return, but perhaps this is because he is going back to the city, and his glimpse of "a strange and lovely world" is followed by one of potatoes which are rotten under their foliage. (pp.235-36). The land is alive, but not friendly:

> ... you looked up a hill of rock and soil and clay that was glistening wet, running with water, and looking almost liquid and somehow alive as it still moved and tumbled and slid and settled. (p.268).

In this slip, it has taken its revenge on human excrescences which would despoil it, and destroyed the instruments of discord in their unsightly shack.[1] But again, this is consequential upon their own actions. The slip is no "deus ex machina" to round off the story. Working through his plot, rather than outside it, Sargeson has prepared for the catastrophe by earlier references to the results of erosion. (pp.123, 126, 250).

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[1] "I have thought that in New Zealand there is a primeval quality of earth which will yet find its expression in literature." M.H. Holcroft, Timeless World (Wellington: Progressive Publishing Society, 1945), p.52.

Selection of incident is an integral part of Sargeson's art. Coherence comes from the consciousness of Henry-Dave, and from the interweaving of three motifs: the security, which yet may stifle, of the cave; the imitation of Christ, or Pan; and the unhappy society which exists in both town and country. But it is the manipulation of the camera, a careful selection of incident, which renders the world in which Henry-Dave exists intelligible and meaningful for him, and thus for the reader. We must be prepared to live inside him for the duration of the novel. This means accepting the laconic New Zealand idioms, the understatement, the subdued lighting and even texture of style which may conceal a skilful arrangement of event. Sometimes one's inner ears may grate, at unfamiliar colloquialisms on paper:

"... trying if this would rub out ..."(p.134), or "... ever and always only too willing and ready ..." (p.195), or an occasional phrase which seems borrowed, like the title, from Bunyan, and which, if it is meant to be ironical, obtrudes the author in a book where prose style is otherwise impeccably consistent:

"... and they exclaimed and cried out over this marvel." (p.201).

Yet this is to overlook the achievement of the work as a whole: of creating and tightly controlling a character who cannot escape his milieu. Sargeson is never inflated or pretentious in this book. Henry-Dave is most convincing in a pathos which is the more eloquent because he is largely inarticulate.

We have seen that the reader's sympathies are engaged by Henry-Dave because we share the shock of experiencing with him each "epiphany" which makes manifest the essential "whatness", usually unprepossessing, of some attitude or way of life, - each carefully selected incident, which buffets him on towards a final summit from where he can coolly reject his two former selves: Domestic and Natural Man, the products of heredity and environment. We have noted that he is impelled on by what he sees and hears about him, and it has been suggested that this scenario is arranged to make his progress seem inevitable. The question remains: does Henry-Dave ever stop being the eyes and ears of the reader to become an individual with a personality of his own which is something more than a repository for sense-

impressions? Is he anything other than a window on Sargeson's world?[1]

The final answer must be no. In Henry-Dave, Sargeson is exploring the mentality of the compulsive drifter, who cannot be expected to have obvious inner springs of action. But he has, it seems, made an attempt to round him out in the passages in italics. These are compulsive impressions on the consciousness of someone who cannot exist apart from his past. They represent not so much a train of thought as a chain of reflexes.[2]

There is the "no please no" ejaculation when a dirty word seems imminent, (p.21), or when the security of his sheltered existence is

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[1] "As a thinking, suffering human being he scarcely exists." Baigent, loc. cit., p.158. Mr. Baigent feels that Sargeson lacks the "novelist's attitude to character," and finds that those passages in italics: "in themselves unconvincing and often absurd, are as unnecessarily irritating as sixpences in the Christmas pudding."

[2] "... the contrapuntal italics are a concession to psychology I don't like." D'Arcy Cresswell, "The First Wasp," P & W, p.6.

threatened in the form of an accident to his mother (pp. 24-26); by the unconventional Uncle Bob (pp.38-39, 43); by the mystery and horror of sex (pp.46, 49); his encounter with Molly, and his consequent fear of reprisals for having LOCKED HER UP (pp. 64-65, 70-72, 74). There are the remembering passages, again moments of intensity where he recalls other moments of intensity, such as when he tells his first boss he must leave (pp. 61-62), or when he remembers the episode with the girl. (p.71). These are mental nightmares of protest: not rational protest against a concept, but compulsive and emotional protest against a word, like "funeral" (p.25), or a public exposition of his religious ideals to someone like Uncle Bob (pp. 38-39), who, in spite of his irreligion, attracts Henry by his sincerity and gaiety, and whose rootless way of life he is to adopt in Part Two.

The italics in Part One show us Henry under stress, fighting against promptings which well up into his mind. He is all repression, all negation. When his breakdown comes (pp. 78-83), the dikes burst, and he is engulfed beneath swirling

waves of recollection. A good example is the sequence on page 79. He successively remembers his schoolfellows' gibes; his fears that his mother could be hurt; a "dirty" rhyme; a schoolboys' fight; the sight of a cow giving birth to a calf; his escapade with Arnold when he tried to see Auntie Clara; his encounter with Cherry; his visit to a Catholic Mass; his favourite book; his dependence upon his mother. "But there was always mother" is the theme of this passage; its motif is wetness and redness. It is prompted by the sound of his mother's voice; she "was there all right. ... So there was no need to worry."

Now this swirl, typical of the early part of the book, does not appear to be an attempt to paint a purplish word-picture, or to explore the meanings and associations of words in such a fruitful way as, say, Joyce has done - although pages 227-31 could be regarded as a Joycean pastiche. Instead, it seems to be an endeavour to knit together a number of past impressions by showing their cumulative effect upon a largely inarticulate character who is nevertheless very sensitive. He

is being rounded out as a figure of deep emotional, but not intellectual, perception. And here the difficulty seems to lie. Henry-Dave is constituted as a man of feeling who is always reacting to his impressions. He cannot have a life of his own in the narrative flow of the novel, for he is always looking out and recording. So italics are used as a device to give him dimension as a person. Yet his thoughts are nothing more than a recapitulation of what he has seen and heard, compressed into patterns which are intensely meaningful for him.

The italics do not add much to our perception of Henry-Dave. They condense what seems plain in Sargeson's previous selection of incident. We could perhaps interpret a number of them as visionary moments; "dreams" during which Henry "sees" reality, or something equally horrible.[1] Without them, the book would still stand as a meaningful whole. It is difficult not to avoid seeing in them what E.M. Forster calls "clues and

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[1] Davin notes: "the sudden intensification which takes place when the boy's imagination quickens into dread, and treats its vision as reality." "The Narrative Technique of Frank Sargeson," P & W, p.68.

chains".[1] Even so, they reinforce a sense of Henry-Dave's helplessness; they are not meant to be one layer of thought peeled off to become intelligible, but all his thoughts, and his personal tragedy stems largely from the fact that he has no other dimension, that he cannot detach himself from past or present except by escaping his environment.

Perhaps the italics are most disconcerting because they are italics. They seem a device to which Sargeson has been driven because his usual style, in conventional type, is not malleable enough to project the reader into the consciousness of an intellectually shallow character. This being so, it is irritating to find them used for straightforward narration at the end of Part One (pp. 87-90), although this may indicate a state of mental equilibrium: an asseveration that Henry cannot face his private mental inquisition. Sargeson may also be hinting here, however obscurely, that this is the same Vanity Fair leading to the Celestial City which Bunyan saw in his dream. A rather mechanical parallel could similarly be

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[1] Aspects of the Novel (Penguin ed., 1963), p.96.

drawn between Cedric's cage and the one in which Christian and Faithful are imprisoned.

In Part Two, however, there is less irrational protest. The question now is Why?, particularly "Why am I here?" (pp.93-97, 99, 108), Maorified as "Waiamihea". He is in search of salvation through a place rather than a person - the Who? of Part One. As Natural Man, he is a "cold embryo waiting to be born."(p.93). At the beginning of Part Two, his bed, no longer a sanctuary, is cold and inhospitable.

The italics, the thought-patterns, of Part Two are still being used by Sargeson to bring Dave's experiences crowding back into his mind so that his sensitivity and helplessness become apparent. Again the device is used arbitrarily: to recount Mr. Anderson's calls to his sheepdogs (p.134), the quail's cry (p.154), or the passages of natural description (pp.167-75). This last instance shows Sargeson making more sophisticated use of interior monologue. Dave tries to escape from his proximity to Johnny (a vagrant, like him, who is haunted by similar maternal, religious, and sexual spectres, "like a

glass you look in and see what you'd hoped you weren't any longer" [sic] (p.158)) by embarking on a mental voyage through a natural wasteland, which parallels the human wastelands that Johnny and he have become in person. There are sexual overtones, such as the pine cones which like Johnny can "hold on to their seed for years", and the passage ends in a symbolic seduction of the soil (pp. 174-75) when Dave takes refuge from his past which he sees mirrored in Johnny. This use of italics is more adventuresome than what has gone before. But Sargeson only hints at complexities. As author, he keeps Dave within well circumscribed limits. He does not let him escape his past: he has "never been anybody else except Henry Griffiths ... and ... never will be." (p.187).

This is stressed again in the italicized section on pages 227-32. He has been talking to, or about, the Andersons, the Macgregors, and Johnny - all lonely wanderers in the sexual desert. He is trying to find his own sense of direction, and his consciousness swirls him into a fantastic Utopian dream, where he attempts to escape with Marge from civilization, only to find "IT'S NOT A

QUESTION OF PLACE" (p.231); his personal tragedy is that he cannot leave behind his head, along with his clothes, and with it "Memories of everything I've ever felt." (p.231). He cannot evade his past. He understands his predicament: "Unless I could forget I could never change myself into the right me." (p.232). His pathos as a dramatic figure lies in the melancholy fact that he cannot forget. Physically and emotionally, Sargeson keeps him anchored to his environment until the last page.

The quotations which prefix the book help to explain Henry-Dave's peregrinations. He wants life, not a "dumb show". He must serve the Philistines to deserve his food, but he will not worship their idols, which may mean distasteful aspects of civilization, such as puritanism or a spurious respectability. The last quotation could mean simply that his grieving mind, the sensitive retina of "sorrow's eye", divides his experiences "entire to many objects". Or it could be that his "substance of a grief" is his awareness that he is condemned to be an outsider, displaced and rootless. If this is the case, then we may interpret his experiences as a horizontal, lineal succession of

incidents which remind him of his predicament. An alternative, and more interesting possibility presents itself. Can we equate Sargeson, as writer, with Henry-Dave, and view the book as analogous to the creative process? This would entail a vertical view, considering Henry-Dave as a static figure who is aware that he is an outsider, and author of a series of fictional representations, "twenty shadows", of his grief. According to this interpretation, his father, Mrs. Macgregor, Johnny, Cedric, and most of the others, should be considered as mirroring, in one way or another, the tragic predicament of the central character. If this is so, there are no villains in I Saw in My Dream, only people as heroic as is Henry-Dave, and everyone is in revolt against, or disillusioned with, an invisible but assumed, conventional state of affairs.

But even if we confine our attention to the book as a traditional monologue, Henry-Dave still engages our sympathy as narrator. He remains embedded in, and surrounded by, life. He is acutely sensitive and perceptive. Yet he is never liberated from his surroundings. He does not develop

spontaneously as a character, apart from the world he inhabits. He comes to realize that "it doesn't matter about place. Accept. But only to do [sic]" (p.266).

Henry-Dave is kept by the author within rigidly self-imposed limits. He is used as a sensitive sounding board against which to measure the reader's response to the impoverished, embittered inhabitants and desolate landscape of that world which Sargeson's artistry has led him to visualize and then describe.

Provided the reader is willing to make this response, a response made easier by the evocative power of this same artistry, we find ourselves more than sympathetic to Henry-Dave in the final pages. Not only has his instinctive revulsion from a sick society enlisted our support for his unwillingness to be anything other than an outsider. We are ourselves compelled to become fugitives from the same desolate landscape.

V. I FOR ONE ...

Just as there was a gap of four years between the publication of Part One of I Saw in My Dream and its final issue in book form, so I for One ... did not appear in its final format, published by Caxton of Christchurch, until 1956, four years after its first appearance in Landfall 22, June, 1952.[1] Like the masterly That Summer, I for One ... is a nouvelle.

This is a study in disillusionment. It is more tightly controlled than I Saw in My Dream, though no less ambitious, for Sargeson has projected himself into the consciousness of a middle-aged spinster. The book exhibits perception, imagination, and deft construction, and there is about it a lively air of conviction. Much of the pathos attached to Katharine's last entries stems from her earlier optimism in face of those circumstances which inexorably drive her towards a tragic resignation.

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[1] cf. Collected Stories, p.293. Confusion arises from the fact that the first edition is dated 1954.

Her passage towards this state is somewhat different from that of other potential outsiders in Sargeson's work. She is less a semi-articulate vagrant, struggling to free herself from her past; she is cast as more intelligent, in an established social niche,[1] and with an ability to detach herself from events, or at least reflect more or less calmly about them. This amplifies her predicament. But she is at one with his other figures in being swept forward by the emotions which carefully selected incidents arouse in her.

E.M. Forster was mentioned in connection with I Saw in My Dream. If that book was Sargeson's Longest Journey, this is his Howards End. Katharine Sheppard, like Helen Wilcox, believes that

> "... personal relations are the real life, for ever and ever.'
> 'Amen!' " [2]

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[1] It would, however, be misleading to consider the book as a portrait of: "... not a potential rebel like Henry Griffiths, but of a character who, though she feels isolated, is essentially conformist." A.W. Stockwell, Landfall 41, p.76, cf. Stevens, op. cit., p.72. The tragedy of both Henry and Katharine is that they cannot, and will not, conform to what they recognize as reality. cf. McCormick, op.cit., p.134: "This comic and corrosive study of the realities lying behind the suburban facade ...".

[2] E.M. Forster, Howards End (Penguin ed., 1961), p.27. The motto of all Sargeson's characters could well be, as Forster puts it: "only connect".

So Katharine tells Dr. Nock

> that I and mother mutually respected and trusted each other, something that was so very important in every relationship. (p.44).

She asks him:

> Wasn't there a feeling of thrill in the mutual trust that we already had in one another? And wasn't there an even deeper thrill in the thought of carrying that trust further? (p.44).

She is faithful to her own ideals. Her tragedy is a reluctant recognition that an appearance of candour in other people is not enough. As the brittle fabric of pretence which surrounds her is remorselessly torn away, she loses her ingenuousness, adopts as her creed "Be Heartless and don't Suffer." (p.48), and finally senses that she has come to see things "with the eyes of a stranger, of one set apart." (p.58).

She is never really embittered by her discoveries. They shock her deeply, as she makes plain in her diary entries, but she only becomes more detached, more wistful and melancholy. As the glamorous haloes which surround Dr. Nock, and Helen, and even her mother, are knocked awry, she is able to comprehend them as they really are,

and not as romance or convention would have liked them to be.[1] These revelations are prepared for throughout the novel, but the intensity of shock with which they register in Katharine's mind conveys much of her disillusionment to the reader.

Thus there is irony, imposed by Sargeson, in her reflection that Hubert:

> does rather make you think of those American advertisements for rental cars which show you the chauffeur as well, and very tall and handsome. Only of course Dr. Nock doesn't wear a uniform. (p.10).

In the event, his uniform of lecherous opportunism seems all the more shabby because it is a rental car (p.49) in which he takes her up hills whose heights had once:

> seemed to guarantee the promise of a new life much less petty and restricted than anything I had known previously ...

Not until the end of the book does Katharine realize that her mother has assumed she is suffering from the after-effects of an

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[1] Katharine is a superficially more adult example of "the instinctive behaviour of child-like people who cannot become accustomed to a civilisation in which social habits conflict with the promptings of the heart, and who, therefore, refuse to adjust themselves to abnormality." Rhodes, loc. cit., pp. 40-41.

abortion. Nor is she told till then of the sordid circumstances surrounding her mother's marriage. Yet the ground is prepared for this crushing revelation from the beginning. On the second page she has "an odd feeling ... that even though I have lived so long in the family, I have seen my parent's marriage only from the outside." (p.8). Another ominous note sounds in her entry for the 26th of July: "You don't understand, Katharine, she said, I never could bear to be any closer to that man." (p.13). Then her mother"seemed to be flirting!" (p.22) with Hubert over the telephone. And although these glimpses of a harsher reality are forgotten by Katharine as she nearly precipitates herself into a relationship with the wicked American resembling that of her parents, they lend weight to her final recorded encounter with "the world that Hubert said I had been protected from." (p.56).

It should not be forgotten that this world is one of Sargeson's making. It is a social wasteland which knows no stratification; menacing because Katharine loses her trust and faith during the journey she must make through it before she can

come to terms with her self. She cannot escape from Miss Drake (pp.16-18), the girls on the beach (pp.19-20), or the little girl whose drawing (pp.18-19) makes Katharine aware of her own predicament. She becomes, in her own mind at least, a déclassé outsider to the conventional society she had known,[1] but she cannot prettify her memories of a new range of acquaintances (including her mother, in a different light), whose ethics have engulfed her ideals.

It is possible to see Katharine as simply another Bill of That Summer: a piece of human driftwood in search of emotional anchorage, and it is true that at the end of the book she is prepared to renew her association with Eunice. She is this. But she is more than merely a perambulating mirror. Unlike Henry-Dave, whose role as, perhaps, Everyman, precludes him from any marked individuality, Katharine seems dramatically alive. This is not to be accounted for simply because she is older than him, or

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[1] "Katharine moves from sentimentality to disillusionment, from being an outsider because she feels there is more in life than she has had, to being an outsider because what life really can be horrifies her." Stevens, op. cit., p.72.

belongs to a different social milieu. Her past life, when she was "so very young and childish" (p.7), rarely obtrudes; it is summoned up at her will. Not as she acts, but "as I write I find the past reviving in me." (p.8).

The impression comes largely from the diary form in which the book is written; a form which allows the author to remain well hidden, and may inevitably force him to sketch in more fully the personality of his persona. Katharine's experiences have to be anterior to her entries, so Sargeson has chosen to lend them an air of immediacy by making her reflect on them as she writes. For this reason, she establishes her mood before describing a scene:

"I don't know why I feel so depressed ..."(p.11).

"Oh yes, I am raging." (p.18).

"My feeling of happiness is absurd." (p.19).

"I feel I want to give up Everything."(p.23).

"Who was it in the Bible who went out among the hills and bewailed her virginity?"(p.27).

"All day I have felt quite numb." (p.33).

"How one folly will drive us on to another ..." (p.45).

"I may as well write it all down now..."(p.48).

"There seems to be no end to all that I might say in these pages ..." (p.54).

It is obvious that this first-person form does not bring the reader appreciably closer to the actual events which Katharine describes. Everything must be filtered through her own, highly individual and feminine consciousness.[1] Hence it is quite appropriate for her to write in a style which suits her character. There is the "fresh and blowy" weather (p.16), or "curiouser" (p.34), for instance. She is conscious of herself as other people see her:

> The times I've caught myself shouting at people I meet on buses and trams! (p.12);
>
> ... I'm afraid my voice must have sounded sharp as well as rueful. (p.51).
>
> ...managing even to contort my face into something which I hoped might pass for a smile. (p.54).

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[1] Sargeson has chosen the persona to suit his theme; thus he makes Katharine write: "I can't help supposing that if Hubert had written an account of all that has happened it would be quite different." (pp. 54-55). But this choice of persona does not necessarily limit the relevance of his theme, or argue that: "as the title suggests, hers is an individual case; there are no wider social implications like those in Mr. Sargeson's earlier writing." Stockwell, loc. cit., p.76.

Though it may at first seem irritatingly fragmentary, diary form permits the author to explore Katharine's reactions to her insights. Take the following extract, for instance. Were the process of becoming an outsider purely a matter of having the wrong experiences, Sargeson could have continued his narrative in three words: "Hubert is married." But it is not the fact revealed which is important to his theme; rather, the effect of the revelation upon the diarist;[1] and yet both are produced in a most convincing, effortless manner:

> I feel so sore. I feel I have never really understood that expression until to-day. As I sit up in bed to scribble these lines I seem to feel the soreness going down my arm and right into my fingertips. I keep fumbling as I try to grip my pen. It is a bruised feeling, an aching feeling, a soreness. I must put it down in black and white, though - Hubert has confessed to me that he is already married. (p.36).

This is a carefully controlled style, drawing strength from its variations upon two simple words: "feel" and "sore".

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[1] "This enacting of a process of discovery is what the art of Frank Sargeson most characteristically achieves, and, as with all major art, it is the enactment which confers value rather than the nature of what is discovered (though, as this is dependent upon the materials of the work, it can never, of course, be disregarded)." E.A. Horsman, "The Art of Frank Sargeson," Landfall 74, p.132.

In keeping with such simplicity and clarity, and as we might expect with diary form, there is little symbolism (a device for the more obtrusive author) in this book. There is the natural world: that "frustrated" sea which she likes best to see "driven by the wind" (p.16), but which prompts her to comment, after Hubert's overtures when "a lunatic gale is blowing in from the sea" against her window: "That one should be protected against such ravishing fury by so frail a barrier!" (p.28). It is this same sea which "was altogether too calming to my elated spirits" (p.19) during the incident with the two girls and their note on the beach. (pp.19-20). Then there may be a macrocosmic reflection of her own impasse in the contrast between the "sudden glory" (p.7) and optimistic promise which nature seems to hold for her at the beginning of the book, and the disillusionment with which it ends: "... the bees in their thousands, competing with the little white-eyes for the honey of our flowering acacia", which she sees "with the eyes of a stranger ..." (p.58). Anything other than such closely integrated symbolism as this would, in any case, detract from

the book's apparent spontaneity.[1]

Nor has it an overt social polemical intention. Hubert cannot readily be fitted into New Zealand suburbia, and the whole sequence ends leaving the youthful Helen, exponent of a mysterious new morality, to succeed in a world where illusions are only a handicap. Katharine herself parallels most closely Frances of In the Midst of Life, or the title figure of Miss Briggs. In Sargeson's treatment of her we are aware of the same superficial nonchalance; the same fundamental concern.[2]

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[1] "... the structure is tight, unified and economical." A.W. Stockwell, loc. cit., pp.66-67.

[2] Professor Horsman argues that Sargeson is "an artist of great technical assurance who is less committed than he seems." (loc.cit., p.133). We could concur, if this meant merely that his villains are systems (or the system), rather than people. It is difficult not to agree, in the main, with Chapman, who judges his position to be one of "unjudging pity." (Landfall 3, p.221). And after all, every writer must be to some extent detached from his work, otherwise it would all be autobiography. Perhaps the most pertinent statement comes from I for One ... itself, on Katie's drawing: "Oh, it wasn't flattering to her - in some ways Mrs. Willis must be an exceedingly unpleasant person; and it was partly because you could see that, yet at the same time feel all the sympathy and tenderness that Katie had felt, that the drawing was so wonderful." (p.18). In this, similarly, lies the art of Frank Sargeson.

Superficially, we have her recollections (pp. 14-16) of visiting the consumptive Colin, which suggest in her a tendency to dominate people. She remembers herself "fussing, I think, a little too much, and being a little bossy" (p.15), and her jealousy that another woman should have "... had him in her pocket." (p.16). As with her style of writing, mannerisms such as these lend her entries an air of compulsive earnestness, which distinguishes her from the deceptive Nock, or her mother. Sargeson emphasizes this close link between her method of reportage and the predicament he indirectly keeps her in. After her drive with Hubert, she considers becoming as completely disillusioned and cynical as everyone else seems to be, by adopting as a maxim 'Be Heartless'. Then she confides to her diary that the language of "the still small voice" which "speaks to us through the language of our doodlings ... is a language which I for one aren't clever enough to decipher." (p.48).

In this book, Sargeson is taking a less encyclopedic view of Katharine than of Henry-Dave; his focus is narrowed and sharpened. She is more

dynamic than the earlier hero, and an articulate intellect keeps her in conscious control of her faculties while she is writing, though not so often during the periods about which she is writing; then, her tendency is to vacillate. She seems more complex than Henry-Dave, because her personality has been formed before the entries begin. But both must be in a state of unknowing in relation to the experiences which will drive them towards a state of awareness.

And here, fundamentally, is where Sargeson's sympathies lie. Not with those whose experiences have led them, like Nock, to become triumphantly sophisticated and therefore treacherous, but with those like Katharine, or Henry-Dave, or Bill, who are naive and totally lacking in a devious subtlety. From a state of relative innocence, they are forced into contact with a hostile world, which may sometimes approximate to a recognizably New Zealand milieu. Katharine is confronted by mirages of respectability and convention which slowly dissolve. Her reaction, like that of Henry-Dave, is not to capitulate to the harsher reality she has encountered,

but to move or be moved into the position of outsider; a position of awareness, but not submission.

VI. DAN DAVIN

Probably the best way to approach Davin is through his own literary credo:

> I conceive all art, then, as a means by which the artist communicates to others a life they would not otherwise have. In the novel the characters are the medium through which this additional life is lived. In autobiography the medium is the author himself and he is himself our proxy.[1]

Obviously this commits him to realistic, conventional fiction. It also raises doubts about the value of selection. For if an author draws heavily upon his own memories of the past, as Davin has done, the reader may forget that he is expected to enter a wholly fictional, created world, and complain that he has been given autobiography disguised as fiction. This, coupled with the fact that Davin is an expatriate who relies mostly upon his memories of a particular

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[1] Landfall 5, p.51. (Reviewing John Mulgan's Report on Experience).

social group, has led some critics to write him off as a sort of novel-making machine which is slowly running down.[1]

Davin is an expatriate. This simple fact should be understood with all its implications. Naturally enough, New Zealand critics expect to find something of value for them and for the rest of us in books which are written about this country. But like many hard-headed, successful novelists, Davin is no doubt aware that it is his readers, and the number of them, which are of most immediate importance. As expatriate, living close to English literary circles, he has to choose themes, techniques, and backgrounds, which will sell well, preferably quickly, to the largest number, and widest range, of readers. His only advantage in being an expatriate, apart from the temporary one of looking at everything from a fresh angle, is that of being able to communicate "to others a life they would not otherwise have." Consequently it is more rewarding for him to return to the antipodean life he has

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[1] cf.: Stevens, op. cit., p.65; R.A. Copland, Landfall 39, pp. 254-5; B.M. O'Dowd, Landfall 50, p.180.

known, or at least to keep his picture of New Zealand recognizably remote from the English scene, which is why we find explanatory comment for his English readers in both Cliffs of Fall[1] and Roads from Home[2].

Because he is an expatriate, too, Davin has perhaps been less in contact with New Zealand speech patterns, as well as with what can only be called "Sargesonia"[3]. For this reason, and because his characters and locale are necessarily limited, his work shows considerable diversity of style and technique[4]. We should acknowledge his skill at delineating, like Bill Pearson in Coal Flat, the cultural and intellectual, as well as geographical, confines of a chosen region. Davin suggests that to escape these, or at least to voluntarily reject them, demands most of all two qualities: strong will, and acute intellectual powers. These two faculties are to be found in the central characters of both the books to be

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[1] pp. 89-90. [2] pp. 25-26, 150-53.

[3] "Technically, Davin owes nothing to local precedent." E.H. McCormick, op. cit., p.155.

[4] cf. his own approbation for Sargeson, P & W, p.71.

considered.[1] We may note in passing that Richard Kane, in No Remittance, is another outsider, although stylistically the book seems rather inhibited, which is perhaps a matter for praise.

Davin's achievement is to give form to, and make articulate, what he considers to be:

> ... the predicament that awaits all men in our time who see that what we have is imperfect but whose critical reason will give no absolute adherence to the popular orthodoxies.[2]

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[1] "Davin's typical hero is young, at odds with the world, essentially puritan but tempted beyond the range of home decencies, anxious to find his own way yet saturated with the outgrown beliefs of a religious childhood, unhappy, a misfit." Stevens, op. cit., p.65.

[2] Landfall 5, pp. 52-3.

VII. CLIFFS OF FALL

Cliffs of Fall was published in 1945, by Nicholson and Watson of London. The title comes from a sonnet by Gerard Manley Hopkins, as do the Part headings: Mind has Mountains, Schooled at Forepangs, Our Small Durance, and Cliffs of Fall. These deal, respectively, with Mark Burke's mental struggle at home to decide whether or not to kill his pregnant girlfriend, Marta;his return to the university city where he meets her; his breakdown during the search for her body; and a dream sequence which ends in involuntary suicide. The action is obviously set in Invercargill, thinly disguised with a "Faraway Hill" (p.24), and Dunedin. (p.90). "It was the earlier part of the thirties" (p.89). Clearly, Davin is calling on memories of his own past, as he has subsequently done in all his other novels, most of his short stories, and a poem.

In Sargeson, as we have discovered, the protagonists are impelled on by the intensity of their emotions: an intensity which is inclined to overpower them and issue forth in action. They rarely have a capacity, or perhaps a desire, for abstract thought, particularly of a rational, calculating kind. First they feel, then they act.[1] Davin's central characters are different. It is less an emotion which propels Mark towards action than an idea. Cliffs of Fall might be summed up as a cerebral novel. It is a curious mixture of the prosaic, the fanciful, and the macabre. Mark Burke exercises his will, to remain apart from other people. He is a young and ambitious "intellectual" whose acrid detachment does not survive what seems a coldheartedly planned and executed murder.[2] Ironically, it is his emotions which rebel to destroy him. Sargeson would probably never have

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[1] "Like the children, the adults act by instinct rather than by reason; they follow the promptings of the heart." Rhodes, loc. cit., p.34.

[2] "Mark is the embodiment of the ardent young colonial, resolved that no personal ties will restrain him from going overseas in pursuit of name and career." McCormick, op. cit., p.154.

questioned their ultimate tyranny.[1]

The book is built around a series of conflicts. Mark is opposed at one level by people and place, and at another level by the tugs of reason and emotion within his self. Davin distances him from people and place by keeping authorial comment within the consciousness of his central character, so that a passage such as the following could be read as a reflection on his friend Bob's political convictions passing rapidly through Mark's mind:

> The missionary spirit which in the last century expressed itself in clumsy tampering, crassly and in quite a few cases kindlily, with misunderstood savage civilisations and in our time finds its outlet in saving souls for the proletarian paradise was quite absent in him. (p.33).

Unfortunately, Davin dispels this first impression by shifting to the present tense in order to

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[1] Davin writes that Sargeson's characters: "are always people emotionally alone." P & W, p.58. For Davin, this characteristic "corresponds to something not only in New Zealand life but in the whole life of our time ... " ibid.

comment as social critic on the next page:

> ... But even when extravagance passes laws it is common sense which accords or does not accord observance. (p.34).[1]

Then he has to take up the story once more, which he does with an "On this occasion ..." (p.34). Again, the passage on "New Zealand's cultured society," and the "powerful nucleus of Scottish Presbyterians" (pp. 89-91), is stridently polemical; it shifts attention from the central character to the author, letting fall the authorial mask, and substituting for skilful revelation of theme a sententious aphorism:

> The young being given to expecting too much and at this time being quickly disappointed were apt to fall swiftly into an exaggerated view of the perfidy and cupidity of human nature. (p.91).

The same technique, though in a different manner, is used in Part II, Chapter III, where rhapsodic reflections on the mutability of passion succeed "the carnal ritual of their souls' communion." (p.123). The voice could be Mark's; its tone is that of Davin:

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[1] "... most of us who are "intellectuals" spend much of our time legitimately deprecating the more irritating and provincial qualities of our countrymen ..." Davin, reviewing W.B. Thomas, Landfall 23, p.249.

> The ecstasy departs, the pattern breaks and he is alone once more, a vain fragment in a schemeless world, a coarse and solitary system thrusting out in vain filaments of feeling, a gross vegetable prisoned for ever in a cellar without issue and blindly, with desperate and unrequited hope, striving towards the sun. (p.125).

This idea of man as insect, with groping antennae, is reiterated in some of his other work; it expresses solitude[1].

A closely patterned time sequence helps to heighten the sense of intensity upon which the effect of the book largely depends. Its action spans just over four days. Part I recounts the weekend at home, Part II, Monday in the city, and Parts III and IV Tuesday evening, after the murder. The deed itself is well presented; Mark recalls it during the search (pp.148-156), in such a way that, while the immediate horror of narrative description is filtered out, its place is taken by revulsion at the murderer's callous candour. Here again, however, Davin slips in a personal comment, perhaps to reassure his readers that he does not share Mark's attitude: "In his new-found naïveté he stood above morality like a state or a god." (p.155).

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[1] cf. Roads from Home, pp.162-63.

Within this tightly-knit time sequence are made explicit the series of conflicts which direct Mark's actions. These shift from clashes with his family and Bob in Part I, to more intellectual disagreements (with the city, Peter, and Marta), in Part II. Then, in the last two parts, external opposition is gradually replaced by conflict within his own mind. When Marta's body is found, his feelings rebel: "Consciousness revolted." (p.167). Memory torments him. He is deserted by his reason. The last part is undoubtedly overwritten; it is more lurid than Joyce's private hell,[1] but the intention is the same, and it is carefully sustained. He is tantalized by the three evils to which he has succumbed: a spider representing feminine "voluptuousness," the cruel world, and finally his reason, embodied in the mocking stranger who lures him to self-destruction. This climactic

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[1] A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, pp. 137-38. Davin may have taken the externals of style from Joyce, but he misses the latter's close integration of form and content, as his detachment: this is a Stephen Hero, not a Portrait. cf. P & W, pp. 64-65. J.C. Reid enumerates other literary influences: Dostoevsky, Gide, Kafka, and Graham Greene. (op. cit., p.65).

passage makes explicit the conflict between what can loosely be called reason and emotion. He realizes that he is no amoral super-man; he regains his humanity by losing his life.

It is the mountains of the mind which baulk Mark of his freedom. His attempts to surmount them are clearly articulated. In the beginning, "... a sort of intellectual piety shackled him to endure ... the painful probation of surveying every possible aspect of the situation before unleashing the will in action." (p.8). At the end of Part I, Chapter I, there is only "this vague fluid feeling which already in spite of himself was hardening itself into an intention." (p.16). His sojourn on the family farm is mentally debilitating; he feels a need for "dialectic and contradiction which are the life because the stimulus of thought." (p.17). Most revealing, however, are his glimpses of the symbolic mountains: "Throughout Mark's childhood their promise had remained ... He had always known he would some day pass them and win through to freedom. They stood for maturity ... " (p.25). Unfortunately, Davin misses the chance

to keep Mark in this state of mental exploration, because, we are told:

> Now he had passed the mountains, ravished their secret and returned with the meagre knowledge that on their further side there dwelt only people of the same unheroic mould, towns as garish as his own. (pp.25-26).

He knows clearly not what he wants, but what he does not want, like "the inexorable dove domesticity" (p.30), or the debilitating local society already referred to. Then, abruptly, Davin throws out a hint that there are deeper, hidden forces at work within Mark's psyche: "His arrogant reasoning mind was the mere lackey of this sinister self." (p.42). Such a "sinister self" could be his assertive ambition; in the event it becomes his emotions, his feeling that he shares in man's corporate responsibility for man. But before this insight can come, Mark has been liberated from his environment to that extent when he considers himself a free agent. This means repudiating his religion, as well as distancing himself from his family. "And reason combined now with ambition to edge him towards a step against which he no longer had supernatural sanctions." (p.53).

Davin allows Mark a curious double standard of affections. Towards Marta he is coldly rational while determining her fate, but towards his mother he is filially submissive. Thus, after the announcement at the dinner table:

> He was embittered with remorse that he should have so shocked his mother ...

and he feels that:

> When his mother finally heard of the macabre end to follow on this brief engagement, her sympathy for her son would be chastened by relief at the termination of a prospective match which she would approve even less if she knew its ramifications. (p.58).

Even when "he saw himself as a martyr to love, sacrificing his career and his hopes to selfless love for a woman," he rejects "this flattering, if sentimental, picture." (p.67). Yet after having concocted a story to excuse to his mother his hasty departure from home he reflects: "The lie would sit more lightly on his conscience than the memory of the hurt on his mother's face." (p.77). This ambivalence is a weakness of the book, and it may be that while the social setting is too much part of Davin's own life, so the Marta episode is too much a figment of his own imagination.

Whatever the case, Mark is brought to the stage where "He lay helpless in the torrent of his will." (p.60). Coming as it does immediately after this assertion, his attempt to outline Marta's "case history" to his brother, Joe (pp. 60-67) enlists the reader's sympathy for the girl, as do her anguished letters (pp. 67-69). Unfortunately it also strains the reader's credulity. Unless Mark's view of himself at this stage appears plausible: "as a martyr to love, sacrificing his career and his hopes to selfless love for a woman" (p.67), the whole passage becomes, like the passionate postprandial episode (pp. 118-33), simply a means of heightening suspense. As Davin has constructed the plot, Marta must be everything which Mark says she is before the murder can seem credible. In fact, however, Davin has allowed his hero, or anti-hero, too much licence. He is neither an ultimately sinister agent of evil, nor a mouthpiece for social protest, but an uneasy compromise between the two. Davin could perhaps have resolved this dichotomy by treating Mark either less sympathetically, or more so, in which case he would probably have had to abandon much of the plot.

As it is, Mark's decision to return to the city takes the form of a desire to resolve those conflicts which, as has been indicated, spring as much from Davin's ambivalent attitude towards his central figure, as from his total artistic conception of him. Thus the decision is compounded of "Tenderness and ruthlessness, love of his bond and longing to be free ..." (p.71). This type of emotion is consciously repressed by his indomitable will, but it makes an appearance in his comments on the family lack of obvious affection:

> Emotionally they all lived in this same isolation, close to one another on condition only that the bond should not be spoken, fond of one another providing always that they should not be compelled to say it. (p.80).

Here again, Davin is perhaps spotlighting a national trait, although it suits well his dramatic purpose.

By the end of Part I, Mark is impeded no longer by "the old distrust of the licensed will." (p.85). Davin takes the opportunity to remove the narrative flow from Mark's consciousness, commenting:

> The arrogant mind ... reckons without the emotion which shrouds each fact as flesh shrouds bone and gives it meaning. (p.86).

Emotion is to be held in abeyance until "reason", or "will" has accomplished its "bare skeleton of facts." (ibid.). Again Davin returns to this basic conflict after the "flashback" (pp.92-100) which is intended to show how Mark's ambition and Marta's dependence are irreconcilable. "The conflict had become explicit." (p.99). Having reached this point through Mark's consciousness, Davin the tragedian steps aside for Davin the detached commentator:

> He forgot that the weakness lay in having formed this tie rather than in the tie itself, that his own heart and passions were the enemy and not their object. (p.99).

Before reverting to his role of dramatist in the pub crawl episode, Davin slips in a piece of unadorned social criticism, in which he argues that the "cheerful utilitarianism" of the New Zealand milieu points the way to a middle-class Utopia where:

> A publican could take his ulcers to his son, a business man could straighten out his more dubious transactions under the careful tutelage of "my son the lawyer." (p.102.

Peter, as musician, is a social outcast. Overall, the pub crawl episode is well written. It is certainly a faithfully recorded part of Dunedin

student life, enlivened with imaginative touches. Half serious, half facetious, it is a welcome change from the doughy earnestness which bogs down rather too much New Zealand fiction. Davin's brief mocking of his own overwrought style in the alcoholic blasphemy incident (p.111) makes a refreshing diversion from his portentousness in the rest of the book.

Peter serves the purpose of making Mark aware that his attempt to realize his ambitions is foredoomed to failure. He tells him that he is "just as silly and sentimental as the rest of us." (p.114). Nevertheless, Mark's "unleashed will" cannot be deterred from its path, even though he senses that "the mild and prescient eye of Peter possessed in spite of its detachment and irony the immediacy and the omniscience of the eye of God." (p.117). This seems an artistic flaw. The reader knows that Mark is predestined to failure. (p.116). He realizes it himself. Only a psychopathic obsession could account for his continuing pursuit, but this is belied by his constant awareness of motive, and the lyricism of

the reunion with Marta, during which "The bitter fancy which had scorned the temptings of a domestic affection as traps to catch boobies lost its acid twist. He saw himself like other men contented." (p.122). The ecstasy passes, however, and as a result "the old flaring lust of ambition raised its head again ..." (p.126). He is strengthened in his resolve, finally, by the sight of a favourable omen: a tree being slowly strangled by a creeper. Hence, he concludes:

> ... unless I undo from my neck, my own knot, the strength to climb, to go on reaching and seeking, will be cut off and there will be the end of the upward challenge, The tree cannot destroy its parasite but at the cost of a little pain I can root out mine. (p.142).

Parts III and IV describe Mark's gradual disintegration. His emotions are no longer atrophied; he becomes more obviously what he has never completely ceased to be: the man of feeling, and finds his conscience as he loses his mind. During the search, he is buoyantly self-confident. But then Davin reveals that the crime had not been committed dispassionately.

"Fury carried him as blindly as paper in the forefront of a storm." (p.153). While looking for the body, he knows he must "... hold in leash the emotions that strained at his will, fierce and ungovernable as starved dogs." (p.161), "What he had done he had done from reason. He had mastered emotion to perform the act; he would not let emotion now control him." (p.165). At the sight of the body, however, his emotions instinctively assert themselves, and "Consciousness revolted." (p.167). Too late, he realizes that "He had killed cold-bloodedly, without mercy, and, most bitter, without reason." (p.167). The double-meaning the word "reason" will stand is here most appropriate.

The finale is reached in Mark's attempts to find the murderer, which is himself, and to escape from him, which of course he cannot. The bizarre result is a lurid schizophrenia. During the dream sequence which concludes the novel by causing Mark's death, Davin completely abandons any attempt at realism.[1] In a way, this is the

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[1] J.C. Reid notes that no "atmospheric preparation" has been made for this final section, the omission of which "does inexcusable violence to artistic unity." (op.cit., p.65). cf. Stevens, op.cit., p.66.

only logical thing he can do if the climax is to surpass the purple passages which have preceded it. It is a convincing description of hallucination and mental derangement. Apart from some vague embodiment of the evils of the flesh, and bestial brutality in general, the first two "visions" (of the spider and the city), do little more than free the narrative from all semblance of sanity. This is not to say that Davin lacks verve in his description of the "orgiastic frieze". (p.177). But there seems a better artistic sense of direction in the last "vision". When his reason becomes embodied in a Satanic anti-self his emotional, "real" character can only rely on sentiment to counter the other's arguments. He realizes the truth of what his reason tells him: "Sentiment is a trap to catch other people, not yourself." (p.185). Then, admitting that he has become the victim of his own sentiment, and finding that he has no rational answer to support this sentiment, his emotions impel his body to destroy his mocking, incarnate reason. The furious attempt to do this results in his death. At the last, his regained "unity of being" summons up for him the will to live, but this has been denied him by his earlier distorted personality.

The total impression with which we are left is one of rather elaborate contrivance. But as our concern is as much with what Davin is attempting to achieve as with what he actually succeeds in accomplishing, we should at least realize that becoming an outsider, or remaining one, is a much more complicated process for Davin than it is for Sargeson. In this light we can sympathize with what Davin is trying to express through his imagery, which is metaphysical in tone, and obviously imposed upon Mark's consciousness by the omniscient author. The following passage, for instance, is undoubtedly bloated, and it draws our attention to Davin, away from the consciousness we have been ostensibly placed within, but it is also a protest at the narrow boundaries of communication:

> Mark had always thought of the life of a tree as a metaphor. And he had not thought of metaphor as the last, despairing attempt to utter the ineffable, the pier we run out into the harbours of the infinite, the pathetic apex to the platonic pyramid of forms, the enlarging glass through which like the astronomer we are permitted to glimpse darkly fragments of the vast inapprehensible. (p.141).

A similar preciosity vitiates the style, whether it be a nonsensical description of cows,

"with their limpid false pathos" (p.69), or the Elizabethan echoes behind:

> He dreaded the moment when she would speak, when she would seek to hang upon this blissful spectre of a future - spectre because already dead within the womb of time like the child in her own womb, though it might stir - word-woven garments ... (p.129).

This sample is typical of the rest; its imagery is clumsy, overlaid, and inconsistent.[1]

Davin is less concerned in Cliffs of Fall with detailing the actions of his outsider than with analyzing the motives for him remaining one, and extending the limits to which he is prepared to venture when conscious of his isolation from conventional moral or social codes. He does this well, and the book is earnest and full of conviction. Yet there is a disconcerting gap between the narrative and descriptive parts, and those which are subjective and emotional. Perhaps this is because, in the former, Davin is using Mark as vehicle for his own social criticisms and philosophical speculations; in the latter, he becomes too much

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[1] "... the book lacks restraint in almost every direction, in the use of imagery, in the analysis of emotion, in the nightmare scene. Too much goes on subjectively, without sufficient relation to the world of things." Reid, op. cit., p.65.

committed to him as an imaginative creation, with the result that he drifts out of artistic control.

His ultimate intention may be the same as that of Sargeson. But the reader finds himself confronted with factual assertions directly, not as the total effect of a vicarious experience. For instance, when he talks about the "mother-knowledge that journeys are the precursors and parable of death" (p.81), surely the phrase has been culled directly from a textbook.[1] It is almost impossible to feel oneself placed within Mark's mind; indeed, Davin continually invites us to look on from without. And as Mark is little more than a mouthpiece for the ideas of his author, the book becomes a confrontation between Davin and reader at the intellectual level, or at best a forum for dialectical exposition. This in itself would be no problem, had not Davin allowed Mark to develop at the same time into a hybrid puppet and daemon.

The result is twofold. On the one hand there is social polemic, such as protests against

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[1] Reid also complains of "a verbosity and turgidity against which the determined reader must struggle to the point of exhaustion." (ibid.) cf. John Reece Cole, Landfall 6, pp. 148-49.

puritanism, conducted at an intellectual level. Thus we are told that "A passionate full relationship of mutual fidelity gains more respect and gives more than any such sadistic asceticism." (p.65). On the other hand, there is Davin the conscious architect, compiling character and plot from what seem to be a number of abstract ideas.

Between Mark and another character, or his environment, effective dramatic tension is lacking. When he disagrees with his friends it is on the intellectual plane, in the form of a debate. Mark knows the shortcomings of his society, and chooses to remain aloof from it. He, or rather Davin, always knows. He does not come to know. Hence we find little of that pathos which attaches to Sargeson's characters when they feel their isolation, but are not articulate enough to mentally rationalize and express it. On the contrary, Mark, an intellectual, triumphs in his solitude. He could well be seen as an uneasy mixture of Davin himself, Joyce's Artist (articulate, awaiting a journey to freedom), and Dostoevsky's "man of destiny", although Davin is here concerned with a rationale of the approach to

murder, and not (as in the case of Raskolnikov) its results[1]: Shakespeare best described the situation; Brutus says:

> Between the acting of a dreadful thing
> And the first motion, all the interim is
> Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.
> The genius and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council, and the state of a man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection. (II, i, 63-9).

That there should be such an uncomfortably wide gap between character as mouthpiece for the author, and character as autonomous dramatic personage is hardly surprising when we recall that this was Davin's first novel. As a work of protest, and partly negation, it was perhaps inevitable that he should have found it difficult to reconcile, if not weld into artistic unity, the conflicting claims of imaginative fiction and autobiographical fact. He admits this himself:

> ... in his first novel a writer usually clears the ground of himself, doing it so clumsily that we are at once aware of his presence in the leading character as if he were wearing a transparent mask. As a writer becomes more skilled and his self less urgent for direct expression he learns to make his mask more opaque.[2]

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[1] "... so many other modern novelists have treated his theme with an artistry he does not yet possess, that its faults are more obvious than its merits." Reid, op. cit., pp. 65-66.

[2] P & W. p.63.

VIII. ROADS FROM HOME.

This book appeared in 1949, published by Michael Joseph of London. Davin is concerned with conflicts between freedom and security. Mark and Katharine, in different ways, wanted types of freedom. But they were both unable to escape their own natures. Henry-Dave found himself in a similar predicament, although his was a search as much for some kind of security as for freedom, and Sargeson's achievement was to develop him to the point where he could reject the former for the latter.

Roads from Home also ends on a note of optimistic assertion. But this is an intellectual, not emotional, final position. Ned Hogan adds an extra dimension to the book. His is a search for freedom at the metaphysical or religious, as well as social, level, and Davin implies that this is more commendable than mere fleshly hedonism, which leads to Elsie's death. Ned is always conscious,

as Mark was, that he only becomes amoral by moving beyond the confines of a rigorously ordered system of morality which he had once accepted. Jack and Norah Hogan never question the rightness of the system. It is part of their temperaments; they have inherited it from their Irish ancestors. For Ned, and to a lesser degree for John, nothing is to be accepted at face value; everything which his family holds sacrosant is open to question; even the nature of reality (pp.144-45). This is not simply a matter of ceasing to practice his religion. He does not eventually do that. He feels, rather that there are no final answers to the questions raised by his inquisitive intellect, and comes to conclude that he will commit himself to nothing but the right to preserve his freedom, in the form of an inquiring mind: "... your right to lose your own soul in your own way ..." (p.254).[1]

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[1] Davin's concern for what we may call the "intellectual outcast" is forcefully expressed in relation to John Mulgan, but the words apply just as well to Ned: "The man who remains true to his intellect, to its integrity, is the martyr of our time: for if, in selfish prudence, he keeps his questioning to himself, he denies the first rule of living - that 'no man is an island'; and if he carries his questioning abroad he is at once in conflict with those angry faiths which are at one only in hating heretics and in believing truth to be a landmark, not a horizon." Landfall 5, p.53.

Unlike Sargeson, therefore, in both these novels Davin has allowed a clearly defined moral order, complete with retributive punishments, and renumerative rewards, to exist antecedent to his development of character; one which may be scrutinized closely, usually critically, by a central character.[1] Hence there is a discursive quality about both Mark's and Ned's monologues. They are more than merely sentient drifters, like Henry-Dave or Bill. All choose to reject the ways of life they have known, but Davin's characters deploy their intellects against immaterial philosophic concepts or religious strictures, even though their emotions may engage them in personal relationships.

This distinction between characters who are primarily rational, and characters who are primarily emotional, may help to explain the final array in Roads from Home. Elsie and Andy have been killed: partly, one suspects, because they infringed the same moral order which has elsewhere

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[1] "... Davin dispenses justice to evil-doers as inexorably as did his southern predecessors, Bathgate and Ferguson." McCormick, op. cit., p.155.

been challenged at the intellectual level, partly because they themselves were not sufficiently rational, being too emotional or appetitive.[1] Similarly, Jack and Norah are only left in a state of emotional equilibrium because the one's peripatetic virility has been displaced by his acceptance of old age, and the other's appetitive possessiveness which threatened her children has been glutted by a grandchild. Conversely, John and Ned have both become profoundly dissatisfied with their own way of life, because they will not be anaesthetized back into the family circle, despite any emotional warmth this course would guarantee.[2] Their detached, rational scrutiny of

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[1] It is not altogether true that "the final note is one of peaceful reconciliation: clan loyalties have been confirmed, and the Protestant daughter-in-law, who threatened family cohesion, has been summarily despatched." (ibid.). John and Ned are neither reconciled nor loyal to the clan, but rather to themselves, while Elsie may be something worse than a disruptive influence, or nominal member of an unpopular religion.

[2] McCormick attaches undue weight to nostalgia, disregarding the various searches for emancipation: "The novel is, in effect, the vindication of a way of life, an affectionate tribute at the shrine of native pieties." (ibid.). Conversely, Stevens (op.cit., p.67) echoes D.H. Monro: "... if one wished to be grandiloquent, one might say that the theme is simply the human predicament. In particular, the strains and stresses of family relations." Landfall 11, p.290.

both themselves and other people has led them by the end of the book to know exactly what it is they do not want to find when they go North. Henry-Dave reached a similar conclusion by a different route. For Davin it is the head, for Sargeson the heart. Either leads to a stance peculiar to the outsider: his necessarily nebulous resolution not to belong.

We must now elucidate the methods Davin has used to lend conviction to this final stance. The most fruitful way of doing this will be to follow Ned's progress through the book, and then to examine the advantages and limitations of the literary technique. For Davin has chosen the authorial attitude of total awareness, one which is in his case unsuited to sympathetically placing itself within the consciousness of any character except someone like Ned.

The first chapter adumbrates most of the later action. In it, we discover through Mrs. Hogan, that Ned has suffered a "breakdown" while studying to become a priest. (p.17). He explains this himself as "Only a halt his commonsense had called because his will wouldn't see reason." (p.30).

"Walls," particularly the claustrophobic, small town type, are anathema to him. (p.24). A religious life seems equally unattractive: "Yet there was something in being a man apart." (p.31). Such a thought might have come from one of Sargeson's solitaries, but Ned's searching mental analysis of reality is not confined to self-scrutiny. It looks outward. He is in protest as much against human relationships, physiological and social, as against a local, distorted society. "They were with you always, the beings whose roots were intertwined with yours." (p.33). This unity of the flesh denies him the freedom he is determined to attain: "Separateness, individuality, illusions merely ... We are not alone." (p.34). Only as a priest could he become free from his mother: "Prison was his permitted privacy." (p.36).

Consequently, tension is engendered between Ned and his mother, which finds its first direct statement at the beginning of Part Two. Within Mrs. Hogan, Davin formulates a number of vague yearnings, couched in an improbably literary flow of consciousness. Kneeling in church, she visualizes her son as the dispenser of fructifying

divine grace, and Davin is at pains to emphasize her own fecundity as a mother. (pp. 86 and 89-90). Within Ned, on the other hand, he establishes a coldly rational mental debate, written in no less an evocative style (p.94), but discursive rather than intuitive, and leading to a succinct final statement of fact: "Because he would not be a priest." (p.88), or, after the sermon which seems modelled on those of Joyce,[1] "No, ... he will not come forth." (p. 97).

A brief piece of verbal fencing between the two of them, including an unusually monosyllabic monologue of protest within Ned's mind (p.113), leads to one of the most adroitly contrived sequences in the book. (pp. 123-28). Mrs. Hogan talks to Ned while she is baking, her vigorous actions reinforcing her words. The tone is exactly right. Confined to a rendition of the spoken voice, Davin never falters:

> It would be a queer thing to see where you'd all be if I weren't here to keep you all straight and reminded you of your duties, I'm sure. (p.125).

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[1] A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, pp.108-35.

Such an ear for dialogue recalls Sargeson.[1] There is a strong undercurrent of mutual suspicion throughout the passage, complicated and heightened by the reader's awareness of how catastrophic it would be for Ned to tell his mother what he really feels. As a result, when the revelation is postponed, tension dissolves, and the climax of this short scene is dramatically most effective.[2]

But this is only after Davin has again stressed the close bond between the two of them, without which his struggle for emancipation would have little meaning. This he does cumbrously, in a turgid, alliterative or repetitive manner which suggests that he has inserted Ned's monologue (pp. 126-27) into a kitchen-sink realistic context primarily to gain a cheap effect. It succeeds in

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[1] cf. his comments about Sargeson on this same point, P & W, pp. 56-57, and on punctuation which fits the narrating voice: p.61.

[2] B.M. O'Dowd observes rightly that this novel "was full of tension and struggle painfully presented from within while still going on, and conveyed the feeling that the issues on which its protagonists were so strenuously engaged were urgent." Landfall 50, p.180.

sharply differentiating one character from the other, which is his immediate intention. But it only rambles around any idea of a fundamental bridge between the two by making Ned strike an attitude, while the jump from flat, colloquial speech to poetically stylized incantation is too abrupt.

By contrast, Chapter 5, Part Two, is much better integrated. We do not seem placed outside Ned's consciousness, listening to dialogue, as in the former passage. Here, we are constantly placed within his mind from the first words: "Even if it all exists, Ned thought ... " (p.144). Thus it is not difficult to move from a brief reportage of external events back to his mind, a place Davin appears to find congenial. Concerned with his own predicament, Ned thinks about diversity, fragmentation, and loneliness.[1] He reflects on:

... a plurality of worlds. (p.144);
... a man solitary in a narrow valley...(p.145);

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[1] R.A. Copland feels that, in The Sullen Bell at least, "Whenever Mr. Davin's characters generalize or philosophize the results are grotesquely immature." Landfall 39, p.255. cf. Paul Day, Landfall 41, p.92.

> ... the difference between father and son ... (ibid.);
>
> ... the self from which you were trying to escape. (p.146);
>
> ... vast variety in sameness ... (p.149);
>
> ... from the idea of something to the idea of nothing. (p.150;
>
> ... the priest and the poet, two solitaries. (p.152);
>
> ... insulated from the warm current of life, set apart ... (p.154);
>
> ... the walls that were building ... (p.156).

And this intermittent train of thought is skilfully contrasted with, as well as provoked by, external events. For instance, a lengthy mental disquisition on subjective apprehensions of reality is broken suddenly by: " 'Crowther's oats is coming along nicely,' said his father." (p.144).

Chapter 8 is similarly successful. We are given a microcosmic view of a segment of society. Davin himself chose part of it for an anthology, calling attention to this, as to the:

> ... conflict between working class parents and their more highly educated children, a conflict with which in England D.H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers has dealt most successfully.[1]

He ranges his characters in symbolical positions on page 192: "John at the couch", as seeking

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[1] The New Zealand Novel, Part Two (Wellington: Department of Education, 1956), p.51.

physical satisfaction; Kate at the chair by the piano", as part of the social and cultural furniture; "Ned at the chair near the door to the hall passage", through which door he wishes to escape; "and the two older women by the fire", as representing the Laurentian mother-figure who sustains life. Again we are placed convincingly within Ned's consciousness. After a good deal of "he said" and "she answered", we reach "Ned noticed". Among a number of other things, Ned notices that his brother has acquired "a self like those of strangers out in the street. ... John, too, it seemed, was behind his wall." (p.192). But Ned's chief concern is for himself, while Davin's chief concern is for Ned. In the same anthology, he writes:

> The technical problem ... [is] to find a style which will be flexible enough to carry the subtler workings of the children's minds and the sturdier, more elemental, thinking of the older generation, and which will yet show that all the characters are members of the one family. Something of the difficulty of this may be seen in the scene above where over the Rosary the family meets in a ritual known to all of them but for each one full of very different meaning.[1]

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[1] ibid., p.52.

It is interesting to note that this is just what Davin does not do. He concentrates exclusively upon Ned, which may be stylistically more appealing to him; or it may be that the theme is of greater importance. Ned feels himself out of harmony with the others (p.192). He invokes the memory of another rebel, his grandfather Ned, arguing to himself that his own pride is no more reprehensible than a passively proud humility, and tentatively concludes that he will hear in the voice of the Church only what suits him best: "For it was the voice of reason, after all, and reason could not be altogether the voice of pride." (p.195). Some earnest prayer brings him to a modus vivendi with his Church, but more important is his decision to emancipate himself from his mother by refusing to become a priest: "His soul was his own now because he would never keep theirs for others." (p.253). Like Henry-Dave, "... once he had told her, he would go North, free. There was no wall to keep him." (p. 254).

We notice, however, that in contrast to Sargeson's treatment of Henry-Dave, Davin has done little to develop Ned as a dramatic figure.

He is striving to liberate himself from the influence of his mother, which expresses itself by wishing him to become a priest, and hence part of the rural establishment. The religious issue is a product of this pressure to conform. A similar situation would have developed, therefore, had he been training for any other vocation which he did not like. But Ned's resolution to affirm his non-commitment to his mother is never put into effect before the book ends, and this is probably because his has been a rational pilgrimage towards emancipation, during which Davin would not care to see him involved in any emotional fracas. Consequently we should consider him as primarily an extension of the narrating voice, always sufficiently detached from his milieu to be able to impartially judge it, rational enough to fully comprehend his own predicament, and condemned by the part Davin has given him never to become closely involved in the narrated drama, or subjected to emotional stress.

Yet the book is full of action. Were this not so, Davin's treatment of Ned, to whom he is most sympathetic, could only seem insipid. The

structure is dramatic in the best sense of the word: frequent changes of scene and character, energetic narration thrusting towards the climax in the penultimate chapter, and a quiet, restrained ending which affords catharsis.[1] His talent lies in choosing the situation which best suits his theme. There is the ferreting episode, for instance (pp. 157-73), and the climactic collision between car and train. (pp. 226-38). Both these are well written, particularly the latter, with its numerous symbolic overtones and preparatory intimations scattered through the book.[2] Nor is Ned the only outsider in Roads from Home. It is worth recalling that Andy is a compulsive drifter and outcast to conventional society, reminiscent of Sargeson's figures, but more ferocious: "If she'd once got the ring in his nose she'd have made a model citizen out of him." (p.237). John,

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[1] Monro takes a different view: "Its chief fault is the determined neatness with which the loose ends are tied in the final pages." loc. cit., p. 290.

[2] pp. 23, 75, 147-48, 156, 175, 200, 208-13, 225. Monro considers the novel too fictional: "The most obvious flaw is the contrived ending, which has more than a touch of Hollywood about it ... " loc. cit., p. 292.

too, mirrors Ned in many respects, which is probably why there is too wide a gulf between his idiomatic, staccato thoughts in the pub scene (Part One, Chapter 3), and his convoluted cogitation during the ferret hunt. (pp.162-63).

Davin is aware of the need for an appropriate style to fit each persona, as we have seen. He does not always achieve this, which may be because his range of sympathy and style is narrow.[1] In Chapter 1, for example, his treatment of Mrs. Curran is inconsistent. On one page he uses to describe her the metaphor of a mountain climber, who "cannot smile without melancholy to catch the evening's sun coining from the rooftops, left in the mornings, a lost and wearier gold." (p.10). This jars against his brisk description on the next page of "the hard tug that had pulled children on to the skids of life and shoved them forward to live with her own force ..." (p.11). During his manipulation of

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[1] His determined attempt to overcome this problem in No Remittance is largely successful, modelled as it seems to be on Sargeson and Joyce Cary.

Elsie, similarly, he feels obliged to insert an occasional profundity. Because this happens in the middle of a train of colloquial thoughts, he has to establish some clumsy connection like: "And she almost knew that even if she had the freedom of the whole world its diameter would only be her length of life, her chain." (p.55) or: "... she had been so happy that she had not thought of ... " (p.215). Then we have a passage like the following. Elsie is recalling her previous existence, when she was as much a part of the "traditional life" as the people to whom she has been speaking:

> She knew their power, absolute in its world. But for her that world was the past now, had to be. Her boats were burnt. (p.218).

The first sentence belongs to Davin; the last, to Elsie. Perhaps this is because she is an emotional outsider to convention, "jealous and embittered" (p.215), and he is less at ease with her than with someone like Ned.

Against this we may set his better integrated comments while dealing with someone like Tim. (p.74). But there still remains a discordant quality about much of the style.

Purple patches in themselves may be no handicap. Yet here they are often grotesquely obtrusive. Even the beginning of Chapter 6, otherwise very well written, is spoiled by the second sentence: "A few sudden spurts of breeze sprinted over the young oats in silence ..." (p.157). Taken literally this is simply nonsense, and his ear for alliteration should be blamed. Even Andy cannot escape his author's prolixity; his strength is of "the kind that could go away from what would not fall in with what it wanted." (p.218). Davin has something valuable to say about working-class mothers, but in Chapter 1 this emerges merely as a homiletic text, when the passer-by glances away from their:

> ... air of type, ... dismissing them as no longer attractive and summing them up accurately but under a generalisation which ignores that a heart is no less a heart because all over the world there are hearts equally tethered to the loyalty and servitude of home. (pp.21-22).

Now the effect of all this is to keep Davin himself, as author, firmly in control of his characters. We never forget the strings

attached to his puppets.[1] He has an excellent ability to describe short scenes. His choice of situation is invariably the right one. There is sufficient tension between characters to sustain most of the authorial comment. Occasionally he chooses an appropriate image, settling it unobtrusively into the narrative flow with a felicitous phrase. The following, for instance, shares something of the taut, vigorous prose which surrounds it:

> A bee, caught idling between the hedges, smashed against the windscreen and stuck there broken, in a transparent pool. (p.208).

But it is significant that the confidences which Kate has been dreaming on page 199 are "so vague, so towering, so ill-defined and unimaged ..." Too much in this novel is imaged, in the sense of being described vividly. Davin constantly tries to amplify the dramatic situation by piling up interminable, indigestible slabs of metaphor.[2]

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[1] "He has adopted a Huxleyan conception of the novel, limited in plot and action, plentifully supplied with talk, and equipped with an interior monologue which acts as an infinitely expansible hold-all for the writer's reflections." McCormick, op. cit., p.155.

[2] "There are still patches of melodramatic heightening and clogged rhetorical effects." Stevens, op. cit., p.66.

His intention is laudable. There can be little doubt that he was thinking of his own literary craft when he has Ned comment:

> The last false summer of the poet was dying. Conflict with the priest, isolation from his fellows, awaited whoever might be bold enough to take up Larry's shrivelled laurel. (p.152).

This is the same loquacious Larry who was once able to:

> ... feel gathered in his mind the wave of an eloquence that was about to beat now on the last shore of a Celtic, epic world.[1] (p.151).

Nonetheless, this conscious poeticizing has its pitfalls, which cannot be glossed over.[2] It is curious to compare in this connection the prose flatness of his poem, Winter Galway.[3]

Davin has succeeded in making his mask more opaque in Roads from Home. Rapid changes of scene and mood give the book an element of complexity and richness. One may quibble over the

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[1] Of his characters, Davin writes: "One might discern a Celtic flourish in their speech, and even in the writer's style." (The New Zealand Novel, Part Two, p.46).

[2] cf. Monro, who takes a similar view. loc. cit., p.292.

[3] Printed Landfall 37, p.11.

opacity of his style. His achievement, however, is to create a strongly regional setting in which a number of characters are deeply embedded. Within this clearly circumscribed environment he has set a "plurality of worlds." (p.146). Mrs. Hogan epitomizes maternal stability, fecundity, and possessiveness; she represents "home". The others try to escape this confinement by striking out on different "roads". Those who are emotional or appetitive and largely inarticulate are predestined to failure. Davin's sympathies lie with Ned and his complement, John, both of whom are intelligent, sensitive, and above all, rational. Both are conscious of their apartness, but whereas John is forced into taking action which separates him from the family complex by applying for a transfer, Ned is left as he was when Davin started, aware that he is incapable of fitting into the home circle or accepting the assumptions around which his parents' lives revolve, and deliberating whether to become an actual outsider to this milieu in the form of priest or exile. Indeed, we suspect that Davin would wish him, after he has gone North, to take up Larry's laurel and become a poet.

IX. CONCLUSIONS.

It is now possible to draw a number of comparisons between the ways in which Sargeson and Davin have approached their novels. We will consider, firstly, how they differ; secondly, what they have in common.

An obvious point of contrast is that of style. Sargeson has chosen to use one which is clipped, restrained, and which appears to derive its cadences from the New Zealand spoken voice. Davin has chosen a luscious style, densely packed with metaphor, which has closer affinity to exclusively literary sources than to colloquial idioms, although he has a perceptive ear for these when he allows his characters to speak in character. At its best, Sargeson's style is lucid, unadorned, and vigorous. It is unobtrusive, forcing us into the dramatic situation. At best, Davin's style becomes lyrical, straining to explore and ramify the ultimate meaning of a concept. When

Sargeson seems to fail, either the medium has become monotonous, or we have lost interest in the future of his characters, so that what is meant to be a train of consciousness reads like straight narration. Davin's lapses are more immediately apparent. His restless search through metaphor for sublimity leads too often to bathos. Because he does not restrict himself to character development, it is best to appreciate both his books as intellectual monologues, however little of substance we feel there may sometimes be to appreciate.

This leads to another difference of technique. Sargeson's imagery reflects his primary concern for the dramatic situation in which he has set his two outsiders. Any symbolism he chooses to use, therefore, must be credible and unobtrusive, if his development of both Henry-Dave and Katharine is to carry conviction. Thus we find it used sparsely, and closely related to the world in which his characters have been placed. His most successfully integrated symbol is that of the cave, or cage, in I Saw in My Dream, where it is developed into a theme of its own,

first parallel, and then intertwined, with the history of Henry-Dave. On the other hand, Davin prefers not to develop a symbol at length. The cliffs, in Cliffs of Fall, and the train, in Roads from Home, are constitutive elements in the plot, which are exploited for their temporary dramatic possibilities. More commonly, however, he relies upon clusters of images in order to extend the relevance of a particular dramatic situation, and to attain a poetic effect. He chooses to remain aloof from his narrative, using it most frequently as a forum for an intellectual dialectic which is precariously anchored in the minds of his protagonists.

Consequently, we should not see Davin as wholly immersed in his plot. It is merely a basis on which he builds this dialectic. The characters towards whom he is most sympathetic are rational and articulate. Working from their fully articulate trains of consciousness, he amplifies their various predicaments by moving into a realm of weighty abstractions. And it is these abstractions which direct the progress of his characters. They are prompted to act by

intellectual inclinations; by the dictates of the mind. We might call this intellectual motivation.

In Sargeson's two novels, however, we come down to earth. Henry-Dave and Katharine live, not through their minds, but through their instincts and feelings. They find their environments intolerable; they feel misfits in alien worlds, and so they move away from what seems hostile, towards a situation which may be more congenial. It is not what they think, but how they feel, which directs their actions. This could be called emotional motivation.

Sargeson, then, has focussed his attention upon two central figures whose predicaments may be mirrored in others, but who are intellectually incapable of telling us so themselves. Davin, however, maintains an intellectual monologue, so that there exists a type of no man's land between author, character, and reader, where the issues with which he is concerned can be defined, turned into abstract concepts, and made explicit. His two books, therefore, are novels of ideas.

Sargeson has little time for abstract ideas. When Katharine thinks, she reflects on her feelings. Henry-Dave merely recapitulates his sense experiences. These are novels of sentiment, although they have been pruned of all vestiges of sentimentality.

This may be because Sargeson would seem to admit no preconceptions about humanity apart from the obvious and personally verifiable one that man is a gregarious creature. If this is the case, and if he has found no place in his personal or artistic view of life for any coherent political, religious, philosophical, or even aesthetic, existing tradition, then it is likely that he can see little to sustain communities except the herd instinct. Of the good short story writer, he has written:

> ... that directly or indirectly, everything that he wrote should reveal an attitude. (A faith or a belief? - not in these times, I'm afraid).[1]

If his attitude involves simply a sense of the interdependence of humanity, then as his works indicate, either fragmentation within, or isolation

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[1] Landfall 1, p.68.

from, the community is the worst thing which can happen. Whatever the case, Sargeson's characters are allowed few more qualities than might be found in any animal in any herd. Henry-Dave and Katharine are the products of their environments. When they are acted upon, they react; they are prompted to act of their own volition only by physical and emotional needs.

By contrast, Davin's characters live through their intellects, rather than their senses. We have seen how Mark discovered, too late, that such an existence can be lopsided and sterile. Ned functions as a disembodied mind. Both are influenced by concepts and ethical codes which are not material. They may fight against, or succumb to, these immaterial influences, but this is not the point. What clearly differentiates Davin from Sargeson, is that his characters find it necessary to find rational justification for their decisions, and this is only because Davin has allowed an extra dimension to exist in his two novels. Call it ethical, spiritual, or philosophic, the important fact remains that it is transcendent and incorporeal.

We have, then, two distinct attitudes to life expressed in these novels: one necessitarian and materialist, the other libertarian and supersensible. Sargeson sees his characters as having been determined by their physical environment. Davin postulates a realm of existence which has nothing to do with locality. Sargeson finds it necessary to account for every physical or emotional stimulus which reaches Henry-Dave, and in the italic passages to make explicit the final form in which this impinges upon his consciousness. Davin takes the artistic liberty of turning each random mental impression or expression into a coherent pattern of thought. People do not think in sentences, of course, but even the most "realistic" writer of fiction must make some such concession to his reader. With Sargeson, we can at least aver that Henry-Dave's italicized thought patterns offer a convincing account of what he is thinking, and that his trains of thought are no more charged with emotion, or inconsequential, than those of his reader might be expected to be. But Davin preserves the artifice. Mark and Ned move in the realm of ideas, conveniently selected and condensed into concepts,

which are measured against or derived from the activities of other intellects in other environments. Hence his characters take account of an existing tradition of both thought and belief: one which belongs not only to New Zealand, but to European civilization. This, coupled with the fact that his books are addressed to English readers, indicates that the matters he discusses must be of more than local relevance. He has succeeded in bringing into focus issues which arise as much from the nature of western civilization as from a specifically regional branch of it.

Can it be said, therefore, that Sargeson has limited his attention to issues which are only of local importance? Were his work merely an onslaught upon national stereotypes this would be true. But it is more. The background which Henry-Dave is driven to reject is incidental to his main theme. Sargeson gives an account, not primarily of the system from which his outcasts become isolated, or of their activities once they have reached their new position, but of the actual process of isolation. And because he has chosen

to concentrate his attention exclusively upon the individual subjected to this process, as well as to restrict his attention to the physical or emotional life of his characters, we are entitled to become more closely involved in the life of the novel; for it could be argued that it is just these elemental responses which Henry-Dave and Katharine share with the reader. Had he endowed either with a more marked personality in the form of a highly developed intellect, it is possible that we would have been forced to become more detached, to evaluate them as people, rather than to associate ourselves sympathetically with them. This argument cannot be taken very far, of course, and it disregards a number of obvious objections. We have suggested, however, that Sargeson keeps to the immediate and the particular in order to make a general statement about the necessary alienation of an individual from society. Whether the effect is successful or not would appear to depend upon the extent to which the underlying assumptions are valid: that bodies are similar, only minds differ and that there can be no such faculty as a controlling intellect which may be separated from all the

determining influences of the immediate environment in which it finds itself.

Having resolved the attitudes expressed in these four novels into two types, we may go further, to suggest how each attitude influences artistic technique. Just as a muddled set of values may cause a writer or critic to arrogate for the creative artist attributes which properly belong to a deity, it seems that Sargeson and Davin, perhaps unwittingly, have sensed a parallel between the fictional world of the novel, populated by the creator of the art form, and the factual world of orthodox religion, populated by a divine Creator. Sargeson sees no need for his characters to be accountable to anyone, so in these novels he refines himself out of existence. Davin, on the other hand, finds it necessary to keep the spider in the web. He remains an integral part of his created world, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

Recognizing this difference of authorial attitude, it is surprising to find how much

Sargeson and Davin have in common. We would expect a measure of agreement in the type of background from which each character detaches himself. This is less obvious in I for One ... and Roads from Home, because both authors have attained more artistic control over their material. Particularly in I Saw in My Dream and Cliffs of Fall, where both are deeply committed to their central characters, we notice that those facets of local society which seem most uncongenial to the hero, and which are therefore most condemned, are a spurious respectability, conformity, and a lack of communication or sympathy within the family circle; although it must be remembered that both writers are evoking the plight of the individual who refuses to conform, not just intent upon a blatant social polemic. That the polemical intention is there, however, seems unquestionable.

This leads to a second point of similarity. Both authors have been strongly influenced by James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. No simple reason can be given for this. It may be that at the time they began writing, the book was everywhere being acclaimed. Or it may be that

they found in it a way of transmuting into art the materials of their own lives. Perhaps they saw themselves placed, like Joyce, in a rather oppressive environment, aware of their mission to give artistic form to the collective conscience of their race, wanting to confirm their prerequisite emancipation from their race by going on a journey (one might say on pilgrimage), preferably to some distant nation. Whatever the case, Stephen Dedalus casts his long shadow over each of the books except I for One ..., and both Henry-Dave and Ned are in search of that modicum of freedom which seems vital to the creative talent.

In fact freedom is practically the only value which is explicitly upheld in these novels, because freedom is almost the only value which the outsider is constituted to uphold. This is not something to be disparaged. At a time when the individual is inundated with propaganda from all directions, liberty may seem an anachronism. The danger is, that the creative artist may feel obliged to reject the lot, adopting a defensive attitude when he really has nothing to defend.

Perhaps this accounts for the irresolution, fear of commitment, and lack of profound emotional, intellectual, or aesthetic sustenance, which vitiates much New Zealand literature.

It would, however, be futile to approach the conclusion of this study on such a melancholy note. We can assert that Sargeson and Davin have treated with conviction the restricted theme with which they are both fundamentally concerned. Their sympathies lie with the solitary in society, with men and women who are alone; this is the pivotal point of similarity upon which any claim to a homogeneity about all four novels must rest. Our interest has centred upon the ways by which both authors have brought their protagonists to, as well as kept them in, this state of solitude. So we have examined the literary techniques they have employed to lend conviction to such an attitude. We have noted how deeply engaged they become while delineating the dilemmas this attitude involves the protagonists in. Although such an attitude assumes the existence of a conventional normality, it has been born in mind that Sargeson may conceive a universe of solitaries, in which no one can properly

be called an outsider because there exists nothing substantial to stand outside.

Finally, but most important, we have resolved the characters who take up this attitude into two types: those who are impelled towards solitude by their emotions, as are Henry-Dave and Katharine; and those like Mark and Ned, who are propelled towards solitude by their thoughts. Anatomically speaking, Sargeson writes of the human heart, Davin, the head. Sargeson's characters are forced to become outcasts, underdogs, because their author sees their actions as determined solely by their environment, dictated primarily by physical needs. Thus he describes the process by which they are compelled to become alone. Davin's characters, however, exercise their wills to become men apart, overmen, because their author considers that their actions are rationally accountable to their intellects. Thus he concerns himself with the process by which they choose to remain alone.

Whether from heart or head, either impetus confers freedom, but only by substituting the frigidity of isolation for the warmth of the community.

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